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A
COMPARATIVE VIEW
OF THE
STATE AND FACULTIES
OF
M A N, &c. &c.

V O L. II.



A
COMPARATIVE VIEW
OF THE
STATE AND FACULTIES
OF
M A N
WITH THOSE OF THE
ANIMAL WORLD.

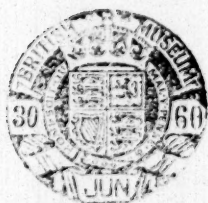
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.

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S E C T I O N III.

THE advantages derived to Mankind from Taste, by which we understand the improved use of the powers of the Imagination, are confined to a very small number. Taste implies not only a quickness and justness of intellectual discernment, but also a delicacy of feeling in regard to pleasure or pain, consequent upon a discernment of its proper object.

VOL. II.

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ject. The servile condition of the bulk of Mankind requires constant labour for their daily subsistence. This of necessity deprives them of the means of improving the powers either of Imagination or of Reason, except so far as their particular employments render such an improvement necessary. Yet there is great reason to think the Men of this class the happiest, at least such of them as are just above want. If they do not enjoy the pleasures arising from the proper culture of the higher powers of their Nature, they are free from the misery consequent upon the abuse of these powers. They are likewise in full possession of one great source of human



human happiness ; which is good health and good spirits. Their Minds never languish for want of exercise or want of a pursuit, and therefore the *tædium vitæ*, the insupportable listlessness arising from the want of something to wish or something to fear, is to them unknown.

BUT even among those to whom an easy fortune gives sufficient leisure and opportunities for the improvement of Taste, we find little attention given to it, and consequently little pleasure derived from it. Nature gives only the seeds of Taste, culture must rear them, or they will never become a considerable source of pleasure. The

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only powers of the Mind, that have been much cultivated in this Island, are those of the Understanding. One unhappy consequence of this has been to dissolve the natural union between philosophy and the fine arts ; an union extremely necessary to their improvement. Hence Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, have been left in the hands of ignorant artists unassisted by philosophy, and even unacquainted with the works of great masters.

THE productions of purely natural Genius are sometimes great and surprising, but are generally attended with a wildness and luxuriancy inconsistent with just Taste.

It

It is the business of philosophy to analyse and ascertain the principles of every art where Taste is concerned; but this does not require a philosopher to be master of the executive part of these arts, or to be an inventor in them. His business is to direct the exertion of Genius in such a manner that its productions may attain to the utmost possible perfection.

It is but lately that any attempt was made among us to analyse the principles of beauty, or of musical expression. And its having been made was entirely owing to the accident of two eminent artists, the one in Painting *, the other in

* Hogarth.

B 3

Music,

Musick †, having a philosophical spirit, and applying it to their several professions. Their being eminent masters and performers, was undoubtedly of singular advantage to them in writing on these subjects, but was by no means so essential as is generally believed. Mr. Webb, who was no painter, has explained the principles of Taste in painting with an accuracy and perspicuity, which would have done honour to the greatest master. He shews at the same time, that if we are wholly guided by the prejudice of names, we no longer trust our own senses; that we must acknowledge merit which we do not

† Avison.

see,

see, and undervalue that which we do; and that, distressed between authority and conviction, we become disgusted with the difficulty of an art, which is perhaps of all others the most easily understood, because it is the most direct and immediate address to the senses.

It is likewise but very lately that modern philosophy has condescended to bestow any attention on poetry or composition of any kind. The genuine spirit of criticism is but just beginning to exert itself. The consequence has been, that all these arts have been under the absolute dominion of fashion and caprice, and therefore have

not given that high and lasting pleasure to the Mind, which they would have done, if they had been exercised in a way agreeable to Nature and just Taste.

Thus in painting, the subject is very seldom such as has any grateful influence on the Mind. The design and execution, as far as the mere painter is concerned, is often admirable, and the taste of imitation is highly gratified, but the whole piece wants meaning and expression, or what it has is trifling and often extremely disagreeable. It is but seldom we see Nature painted in her most amiable or graceful forms, in a way that may captivate

vate the heart and make it better. On the contrary, we often find her in situations the most unpleasing to the Mind, in old-age, deformity, disease, and idiotism. The Dutch and many of the Flemish commonly exhibit her in the lowest and most debasing attitudes; and in Italy the Genius of painting is frequently prostituted to the purposes of the most despicable superstition.—Thus the Mind is disappointed in the pleasure which this elegant art is so admirably fitted to convey; the agreeable effect of the imitation being counteracted and destroyed by the unhappy choice of the subject.

THE

THE influence of Music over the Mind is perhaps greater than that of any of the fine arts. It is capable of raising and soothing every passion and emotion of the Soul. Yet the real effects produced by it are inconsiderable. This is in a great measure owing to its being left in the hands of practical Musicians, and not under the direction of Taste and Philosophy: For, in order to give Music any extensive influence over the Mind, the composer and performer must understand well the human heart, the various associations of the passions, and the natural transitions from one to another, so as they may be able to com-

command them, in consequence of their skill in musical expression.

No Science ever flourished, while it was confined to a set of Men who lived by it as a profession. Such Men have pursuits very different from the end and design of their art. The interested views of a trade are widely different from the enlarged and liberal prospects of Genius and Science. When the knowledge of an art is confined in this manner, every private practitioner must attend to the general principles of his craft, or starve. If he goes out of the common path, he is in danger of becoming an object of the jealousy and the abuse of his brethren; and among the rest of Mankind he
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can neither find judges nor patrons. This is particularly the case of the delightful art we are speaking of, which has now become a Science scarcely understood by any but a few composers and performers. They alone direct the public Taste, or rather dictate to the world what they should admire and be moved with; and the vanity of most people makes them acquiesce in this assumed authority, lest otherwise they should be suspected to want Taste and knowledge in the subject. In the mean time, Men of sense and candor, not finding that pleasure in Music which they were made to expect, are above dissimbling, and give up all pretensions

to the least knowledge in the Subject. They are even modest enough to ascribe their insensibility of the charms of Music to their want of a good ear, or a natural Taste for it, and own that they find the Science so complicated, that they do not think it worth the trouble it must cost them to acquire an artificial one. They resolve to abandon an Art in which they despair of ever becoming such proficient, as either to derive pleasure from it themselves, or to be able to communicate it to others, at least without making that the serious business of Life, which ought only to be the amusement of an idle or the solace of a melancholy hour. But before
they

they entirely forego one of the most innocent amusements in life, not to speak of it in an higher stile, it would not be improper to enquire a little more particularly into the subject. We shall therefore here beg leave to examine some of the first principles of Taste in Music with the utmost freedom.

MUSIC is the Science of sounds, so far as they affect the Mind. Nature independent of custom has connected certain sounds or tones with certain feelings of the Mind. Measure and proportion in sounds have likewise their foundation in Nature. Thus certain tones are naturally adapted to solemn, plaintive, and mournful subjects, and the movement

ment is slow; others are expressive of the joyous and elevating, and the movement is quick.—Sounds likewise affect the Mind, as they are loud or soft, rough or smooth, distinct from the consideration of their gravity or acuteness. Thus in the *Æolian* harp the tones are pleasant and soothing, though there is no succession of notes varying in acuteness, but only in loudness. The effect of the common drum, in rousing and elevating the Mind, is very strong; yet it has no variety of notes; though the effect indeed here depends much on the proportion and measure of the notes.

MELODY consists in the agreeable succession of single sounds.—

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The melody that pleases in one country does not equally please in another, though there are certain general principles which universally regulate it, the scale of Music being the same in all countries.—Harmony consists in the agreeable effect of sounds differing in acuteness produced together; the general principles of it are likewise fixed.

ONE end of Music is merely to communicate pleasure, by giving a slight and transient gratification to the Ear; but the far nobler and more important is to command the passions and move the heart. In the first view it is an innocent amusement, well fitted to give an agreeable

agreeable relaxation to the Mind from the fatigue of study or business.—In the other it is one of the most useful arts in life.

MUSIC has always been an art of more real importance among uncultivated than among civilized nations. Among the former we always find it intimately connected with poetry and dancing, and it appears, by the testimony of many ancient * authors, that Music, in the original sense of the word, comprehended melody, dance and song. By these almost all barbarous nations in every age, and in every climate, have expressed all strong emotions of the Mind. By † these attractive

* See Plato and Athenæus. † Brown.

and powerful arts they celebrate their public solemnities; by these they lament their private and public calamities, the death of friends or the loss of warriors; by these united they express their joy on their marriages, harvests, huntings, victories; praise the great actions of their gods and heroes; excite each other to war and brave exploits, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.

IN the earliest periods of the Greek states, their most ancient maxims, exhortations, and laws, and even their history, were written in verse, their religious rites were accompanied by dance and song, and their earliest oracles were
delivered

delivered in verse, and sung by the priest or priestess of the supposed god. While melody, therefore, conjoined with poetry, continued to be the established vehicle of all the leading principles of religion, morals, and polity, they became the natural and proper objects of public attention and regard, and bore a principal and essential part in the * education of Children. Hence we see how Music among the ancient Greeks was esteemed a necessary accomplishment, and why an ignorance in this art was regarded as a capital defect. Thus Themistocles came to be reproached with his ignorance in † Music; and

* Plutarchus de Musica: † Cicero:

the many enormous crimes committed in the country of Cynethe were attributed by the neighbouring states to the neglect of * Music; nor was the reproach thrown, in these days, upon such as were ignorant of the art, without a just foundation; because this ignorance implied a general deficiency in the three great articles of education; religion, morals, and polity.

† Such was the enlarged Nature of ancient Music when applied to education, and not a mere proficiency in the playing or singing art, as has been very generally supposed. Most authors have been led

* Athenæus, Polybius:

† See Plato de Legibus.

into this mistake by Aristotle, who speaks of Music as an art distinct from Poetry. But the reason of this was, that in the time of Aristotle, a separation of the melody and song had taken place; the first retained the name of Music, and the second assumed that of Poetry.

IN the most ancient times the character of a bard was of great dignity and importance, being usually united with that of legislator and chief magistrate. Even after the separation was first made, he continued for some time to be the second character in the Community, as an assistant to the magistrate in governing the people*.

* Suidas on the Lesbian Song. Hesiod.

SUCH was the important and honourable state of Music, not only in ancient Greece, but in the early periods of all civilized nations in every part of the world.

IN all the Celtic nations, and particularly in Great Britain, the bards were anciently of the highest rank and estimation. The character of general, poet, and musician, were united in Fingal and † Ossian. The progress of Edward the first's arms was so much retarded by the influence of the Welsh bards, whose
songs

† Such was the song of Fingal, in the day of his joy. His thousand bards leaned forward from their seats, to hear the voice of the king. It was like the Music of the
harp

songs breathed the high spirit of liberty and war, that he basely ordered them to be slain: an event that has given rise to one of the most elegant and sublime odes that any language has produced.

In proportion as the simplicity and purity of ancient manners declined in Greece, these sister arts, which formerly used to be the handmaids of virtue, came by degrees to be prostituted to the purposes of vice or of mere amuse-

harp on the gale of the spring. Lovely were thy thoughts, O Fingal! why had not Ossian the strength of thy soul? but thou standest alone, my father; and who can equal the king of Morven. Carthon.

ment. A corruption of manners debased these arts, which, when once corrupted, become principal instruments in compleating the destruction of religion and virtue. Yet the same cause which turned them aside from their original use, contributed to their improvement as particular arts. When Music, Dancing, and Poetry came to be considered as only subservient to pleasure, a higher degree of proficiency in them became necessary, and consequently a more severe application to each. This compleated their separation from one another, and occasioned their falling entirely into the hands of such Men

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as devoted their whole time to their cultivation. Thus the complex character of legislator, poet, actor and musician, which formerly subsisted in one person, came to be separated into distinct professions, and the unworthy purposes to which Music in particular came to be applied, made a * proficiency in it unsuitable to any Man of high rank and character.

Doctor Brown has treated this subject at full length, in a very learned dissertation; where he has shewn with great ingenuity and by the clearest deduction from facts, how melody, dance, and song, came, in the progress of civilized so-

* Aristot. Politic. Plutar. de Musica.

ciety,

ciety, in different nations, to be cultivated separately ; and by what means, upon their total separation, the power, the utility, and dignity of Music, has sunk into a general corruption and contempt.

THE effect of eloquence depends in a great measure on Music. We take Music here in the large and proper sense of the word ; the art of variously affecting the Mind by the power of sounds. In this sense, all Mankind are more or less judges of it, without regard to exactness of ear. Every Man feels the difference between a sweet and melodious voice and a harsh dissonant one.

EVERY

EVERY agreeable speaker, independent of the sweetness of his tones, rises and falls in his voice in strict musical intervals, and therefore his discourse is as capable of being set in musical characters as any song whatever. But however musical a voice may be, if the intervals which it uses are uniformly the same, it displeases, because the ear is fatigued with the constant return of the same sounds, however agreeable; and if we attend to the subject, we are displeased on another account, at hearing the same musical passages made use of to express and inspire sentiments of the most different and opposite natures; whereas the one
should

should be always varying and adapted to the other. This has justly brought great ridicule on what is called Singing a Discourse, though what really offends is either the badness of the song, or its being tiresome for want of variety.

IF we examine into the effects produced by eloquence in all ages, we must ascribe them in a great degree to the power of sounds. We allow, at the same time, that composition, action, the expression of the countenance, and some other circumstances, contribute their share, though a much smaller one.—The most pathetic composition may be pronounced in such a manner, as to prevent its having

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ing the least influence. Oration^s which have commanded the Minds of the greatest Men, and determined the fate of nations, have been read in the closet with languor and disgust.

As the proper application of the voice to the purposes of eloquence has been little attended to, it has been thought an art unattainable by any rules, and depending entirely on natural Taste and Genius. This is in some measure true; yet it is much more reducible to rules, and more capable of being taught, than is commonly imagined. Indeed, before philosophy ascertains and methodizes the ideas and principles on which an art depends,

it is no wonder it be difficult of acquisition. The very language in which it is to be communicated is to be formed, and it is a considerable time before this language comes to be understood and adopted.—We have a remarkable instance of this in the subject of musical expression, or performing a piece of Music with Taste and propriety. People were sensible, that the same Music performed by different artists had very different effects. Yet they all played the same notes, and played equally well in tune and in time. But still there was an unknown somewhat, that gave it meaning and expression from one hand, while
from

from another it was lifeless and insipid. People were satisfied in resolving this into performing with or without Taste, which was thought the entire gift of Nature.—Geminiani, who was both a composer and performer of the highest class, first thought of reducing the art of playing on the Violin with Taste to rules, for which purpose he was obliged to make a great addition to the musical language and characters. The scheme was executed with great ingenuity, but has not met with the attention it deserved.

MUSIC, like Eloquence, must propose as its end a certain effect to be produced on the hearers. If

it produces this effect, it is good Music; if it fails, it is bad.—No Music can be pronounced good or bad in itself; it can only be relatively so. Every country has a melody peculiar to itself, expressive of the several passions. A composer must have a particular regard to this, if he proposes to affect them.—Thus in Scotland there is a chearful Music perfectly well fitted to inspire that joyous mirth suited to dancing, and a plaintive Music peculiarly expressive of that tenderness and pleasing melancholy attendant on distress in love; both original in their kind, and different from every other in Europe.

Europe *. It is of no consequence whence this Music derives its origin,

* There is a simplicity, a delicacy, and pathetic expression in the Scotch airs, which have always made them admired by people of genuine Taste in Music. It is a general opinion, that many of them were composed by David Rizzio : but this appears very improbable. There is a peculiarity in the stile of the Scotch melody, which foreigners, even some of great knowledge in Music, who resided long in Scotland, have often attempted to imitate, but never with success. It is not therefore probable, that a stranger, in the decline of life, who resided only three or four years in Scotland, should enter so perfectly into the Taste of the national Music, as to compose airs, which the nicest judges cannot distinguish from those which are certainly known to be of much greater antiquity than Rizzio's. The tradition on this subject is very vague, and there is no shadow of authority to ascribe any one particular Scotch air to

gin, whether it be simple or complex, agreeable to the rules of regular composition, or against them; whilst it produces its intended effect, in a superior degree to any other, it is the preferable Music; and while a person feels this effect, it is a reflection on his Taste and common sense, if not on his can-

Rizzio. If he had composed any Music while he was in Scotland, it is highly probable it would have partaken of the genius of that melody, to which he had been accustomed; but the stile of the Scotch and Italian airs, in Rizzio's time, bear not the least resemblance to one another. Perhaps he might have moulded some of the Scotch airs into a more regular form; but if he did, it was probably no real improvement; as the wildest of them, which bid defiance to all rules of modern composition, are generally the most powerfully affecting.

dor,

dor, to despise it. The Scotch will in all probability soon lose this native Music, the source of so much pleasure to their ancestors, without acquiring any other in its place. Most musical people in Scotland either neglect it altogether, or destroy that simplicity in its performance on which its effects so entirely depended, by a fantastical and absurd addition of Graces foreign to the genius of its Melody. The contempt shewn for the Scotch Music, in its primitive and pathetic simplicity, by those who, from a superior skill in the science, are thought entitled to lead the public Taste, has nearly brought it into universal discredit. Such is the

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tyranny

tyranny of Fashion, and such are the effects of that Vanity, which determines us, in obedience to its dictates, to resign any pleasure, and to submit to almost any pain.

THEY who apply much of their time to Music, acquire new Tastes, besides their national one, and, in the infinite variety which melody and harmony are capable of, discover new sources of pleasure formerly unknown to them. But the finest natural Taste never adopts a new one, till the ear has been long accustomed to it; and, after all, seldom enters into it with that warmth and feeling, which those do to whom it is national.

THE general admiration pre-
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tended to be given to foreign Music in Britain, is in general despicable affectation. In Italy we sometimes see the natives transported, at the opera, with all that variety of delight and passion which the composer intended to produce. The same opera in England is seen with the most remarkable listlessness and inattention. It can raise no passion in the audience, because they do not understand the language in which it is written. To them it has as little meaning as a piece of instrumental Music. The ear may be transiently pleased with the air of a song; but that is the most trifling effect of Music. Among the very few who

understand the language, and enter with pleasure and taste into the Italian Music, the conduct of the dramatic part appears so ridiculous, that they can feel nothing of that transport of passion, the united effect of Music and Poetry, which may be gradually raised by the artful texture and unfolding of a dramatic story *.—Yet vanity prevails so much over the sense of pleasure itself, that the Italian opera is in England more frequented by people of rank, than any other public diversion; and, to avoid the imputation of want of Taste, they condemn themselves to some hours painful attendance on it every week, and pretend to talk

* Brown.

of

of it in raptures, to which their hearts will ever remain strangers.

NOTHING can afford so convincing a proof of the absolute incapacity of our modern Music, to produce any lasting effect on the passions of Mankind, as the observation of the effects produced by an opera on people of the greatest knowledge and Taste in Music, as well as on those who are most ignorant of the science. An affecting story may be wrought up, by the genius of a Metastasio, in a manner that shall make it be read with the highest delight and emotion by every person of Taste and Sensibility. We should naturally suppose that the addition:

of Music ought to communicate greater energy to the composition; but, instead of this, it totally annihilates it. Many people may return home from an opera with their ears highly gratified by some particular songs, or passages of songs; but never one returned affected with the catastrophe of the piece, or with the heart-felt emotion produced by Othello or King Lear.

SIMPLICITY in melody is absolutely necessary in all Music intended to reach the heart, or even greatly to delight the ear. The effect here must be produced instantaneously, or not at all. The subject of the Music must therefore

fore be simple, and easily traced, and not a single note or grace should be admitted, but what has a tendency to the proposed end.— If simplicity of melody be so necessary, where the intention is to move the passions, simplicity of harmony, which ought always to be subservient to it, must be still more necessary. Some of the most delicate touches of pathetic Music will not allow any accompaniment.

THE ancient Music certainly produced much greater and more general effects than the modern, though we should allow the accounts we have of it to be much exaggerated. Yet the science of
Music

Music was in a very low state among the ancients. They were probably strangers to harmony, at least if they knew it they neglected it, all the voices and instruments being unisons in concert : and the instruments they made use of, appear to have been much inferior, in respect of compass, expression, and variety, to those which we are possessed of. Yet these very deficiencies might render their Music more expressive and powerful. The only view of composers was to touch the heart and the passions. Simple melody was sufficient for this purpose, which might easily be comprehended and felt by the whole people. There were not two different

ferent species of Music among them, as with us, one for the learned in the science, and another for the vulgar.

* ALTHOUGH we are ignorant of the particular construction of the ancient Music, yet we know it must have been altogether simple; such as statesmen, warriors, and bards, occupied in other pursuits, could compose, and such as people of all ranks, children, and men busied in other concerns of life, could learn and practise. We are likewise strangers to the particular structure of their instruments, but we have the greatest reason to believe they were extremely simple.

* Brown.

The

The chords of the lyre were originally but four *. They were afterwards increased to seven, at which number they were fixed by the laws of Sparta †, and Timotheus was banished for adding four additional strings; but we are uncertain of the intervals by which the strings of the lyre ascended. Those who regard only the advancement of Music as a science, treat the laws of Sparta upon this subject with great ridicule; but they who consider it as an art intimately connected with the whole

* Pausanias.

† The art of Music had formerly been fixed and made unalterable in Crete and Egypt. Plato de legibus.

fabric

fabric of its religion, morals, and policy, will view them in a very different light, and see the necessity of preserving their Music in the utmost degree of simplicity. In fact, when the lyre, in process of time, acquired forty strings, when Music came to be a complicated art, and to be separately cultivated by those who gave up their whole time to its improvement, its noblest end and aim was lost. In * Plutarch's time it was sunk into a mere amusement of the theatre. The same causes have produced the same effects in modern times. In proportion as Music has be-

* De Musica.

come

come more artificial, and more difficult in the execution, it has lost of its power and influence.

It was formerly observed, that the power of the ancient melody depended much on its union with Poetry. There are other circumstances which might contribute to this power. The different passions naturally express themselves by different sounds; but this expression seems capable of a considerable latitude, and may be much altered by early association and habit. When particular sounds and a certain strain of melody are impressed upon young minds, in a uniform connexion with certain passions expressed

pressed in a song, this regular association raises these sounds, in progress of time, into a kind of natural and expressive language of the passions. * Melody therefore is to be considered, in a certain degree, as a relative thing, founded in the particular associations and habits of different people; and, by custom, like language, annexed to their sentiments and passions. We generally hear with pleasure the Music we have been accustomed to in our youth, because it awakes the memory of our guiltless and happy days. We are even sometimes wonderfully affected with

* Brown.

airs, that neither appear, to ourselves nor to others, to have any peculiar expression. The reason is, we have first heard these airs at a time when our minds were so deeply affected by some passion, as to give a tincture to every object that presented itself at the same time; and though the passion and the cause of it are entirely forgot, yet an object that has once been connected with them, will often awake the emotion, though it cannot recall to remembrance the original cause of it.

* SIMILAR associations are formed, by the appropriations, in a

* Brown.

great

great measure accidental, which different nations have given to particular musical instruments, as bells, drums, trumpets, and organs ; in consequence of which they excite ideas and passions in some people which they do not in others. No Englishman can annex warlike ideas to the sound of a bagpipe.

WE have endeavoured to explain some of the causes which gave such energy to the ancient Music, and which still endear the melody of every country to its own inhabitants : Perhaps, for the reasons mentioned above, if we were to recover the Music which once

had so much power in the early periods of the Greek states, it might have no such charms for modern ears, as some great admirers of antiquity imagine. Instrumental Music indeed, unaccompanied with dance and song, was never held in esteem till the later periods of antiquity; in which a general separation of these arts took place. * Plato calls instrumental Music an unmeaning thing, and an abuse of melody.

THERE is another cause, which might probably contribute to make the ancient Music more powerfully expressive. In the infant state of

* De legibus.

societies,

focieties, * Men's feelings and passions are strong, because they are never disguised nor restrained; their imaginations are warm and luxuriant, from never having suffered any check. This disposes them to that enthusiasm so favourable to Poetry and Music. The effusions of Genius among such a people may often possess the most pathetic sublimity and simplicity of stile, though greatly deficient in point of elegance and regularity. And it is to be observed, that these last qualities are more peculiarly requisite in some of the other fine arts, than

* This subject is treated with great accuracy and judgment by Dr. Blair, in his elegant dissertation on the poems of Ossian.

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they are in that species of Music which is designed to affect the passions, where too much ornament is always hurtful; and in place of promoting, is much more likely to defeat the desired effect*. The

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* Simplicity and conciseness are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expressions. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few and plain words: for every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells, when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to dress it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over, the beautiful may remain,

tranquillity too of rural life, and the variety of images with which it fills the imagination, have as beneficial an influence upon Genius, as they have upon the dispositions of the heart. The country, and particularly the pastoral countries, are the favourite recesses of Poetry and Music.

THE introduction of harmony opened a new world in Music. It promised to give that variety which melody alone could never afford, and likewise to give melody an ad-

main, but the sublime is gone. Dr. Blair's Critical Dissertation on the poems of Ossian.

The application of these ingenious observations to Music is too obvious to need any illustration.

ditional charm and energy. Unfortunately the first composers were so immersed in the study of harmony, which soon appeared to be a science of great extent and intricacy, that these principal ends of it were forgot. They valued themselves on the laboured construction of parts which were multiplied in a surprising manner.—In fact, this art of counterpoint and complicated harmony, invented by Guido in the eleventh century, was brought to its highest degree of perfection by Palæstrini, who lived in the time of Leo X. But this species of Music could only be understood by the few who had made it their particular study. To every one else it
 appeared.

appeared a confused jargon of sounds without design or meaning. To the very few who understood it there appeared an evident deficiency in air or melody, especially when the parts were made to-run in strict fugues or canons, with which air is in a great measure incompatible.—Besides the real deficiency of air in these compositions, it required the attention to be constantly exerted to trace the subject of the Music, as it was alternately carried on through the several parts; an attention inconsistent with what delights the ear, much more with what touches the passions; where this is the design of the Composer, the mind must be totally disenga-

ged, must see no contrivance, admire no execution; but be open and passive to the intended impression.

“ We must however acknowledge, that there was often a Gravity, a Majesty, and Solemnity, in these old full Compositions, admirably suited for the public services of the Church. Altho’ perhaps less fitted to excite particular passions, yet they tended to sooth the mind into a tranquillity that disengaged it from all earthly cares and pleasures, and at the same time disposed it to that peculiar elevation which raises the soul to Heaven, especially when accompanied by the sweet and solemn notes of the Organ.

THE

THE artifice of fugues in vocal Music seems in a peculiar manner ill adapted to affect the passions. If every one of four voices is expressing a different sentiment and a different musical passage at the same time, the hearer cannot possibly attend to, and be affected by them all.—This is a stile of composition in which a person, without the least Taste or Genius, may become a considerable proficient, by the mere force of study: But without a very great share of these, to give spirit and meaning to the leading airs or subjects, such compositions will always be dry and uninteresting. Catches, indeed, are a species of fugues, highly productive of mirth

and jollity; but the pleasure we receive from these seldom arises either from the melody itself, or from its being peculiarly expressive of the subject. It arises principally from the droll and unexpected assemblage of words from the different parts, and from the spirit and humour with which they are sung.

BESIDES the objections that lie against all complex Music with respect to its composition, there are others arising from the great difficulty of its execution. It is not easy to preserve a number of instruments, playing together, in tune. Stringed instruments are falling, while wind instruments naturally rise in their tone during the performance.

mance. It is not even sufficient that all the performers play in the most exact tune and time. They must all understand the stile and design of the composition, and be able to make the responses in the fugue with proper spirit. Every one must know how to carry on the subject with the proper expression, when it is his turn to lead; and when he falls into an auxiliary part, he must know how to conduct his accompaniment in such a manner as to give an additional force to the leading subject. But musical taste and judgment are most remarkably displayed in the proper accompanying of vocal Music, especially with the thorough bass. If
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this is not conducted with the strictest attention to heighten the intended expression of the song, it destroys it altogether, as frequently happens from the throwing in the full chords, when a single note should only have been struck, or when perhaps the accompaniment should have ceased altogether.

THESE are difficulties few performers have an idea of, and fewer are able to conquer. Most of them think they sufficiently acquit themselves, if they play in tune and in time; and vanity often leads them to make their voice or instrument to be heard above the rest, without paying the least regard to the design of the Composer.

It has been much the fashion, for some years past, to regard air alone in musical compositions; and the full and regular works of harmony have fallen into neglect, being considered as cold and spiritless. This change has been introduced by composers, who unfortunately happened to be great performers themselves. These people had no opportunities, in the old compositions, of shewing the dexterity of their execution; the wild and extravagant flights which they indulged, in order to display this, being absolutely destructive of the harmony. They introduced therefore Solo's of their own composition, or Concerto's, which from the thinness
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and meagreness of the parts, cannot be considered in any other light than Solo's.—It is not easy to characterise the stile of most of these pieces. In truth they have no character or meaning at all. The authors of them are little concerned what subject they choose, their single view being to excite the surprise and admiration of their hearers. This they do by the most unnatural and wild excursions, that have not the remotest tendency to charm the ear or touch the heart. In many passages they are grating to the ear, when performed by the best hands, but when executed by ordinary performers, they are perfectly intolerable. These compositions

tions therefore want the merit which full harmony possesses, and are deficient in that simplicity, spirit, and elegance, which alone can recommend melody.

THE present mode is to admire a new, noisy stile of composition, lately cultivated in Germany, and to despise Corelli as wanting spirit and variety. The truth is, Corelli's stile and this will not bear a comparison. Corelli's excellence consists in the chastity of his composition and in the richness and sweetness of his harmonies. The other sometimes pleases by its spirit and a wild luxuriancy, which makes an agreeable variety in a concert, but possesses too little of the elegance

gance and pathetic expression of Music to remain long the public Taste. The great merit of that nobleman's compositions, who first introduced this species of Music into this country, and his own spirited performance of them, first seduced the public ear. They are certainly much superior to any of the kind we have yet heard; though, by the delicacy of the airs in his slow movements, he displays a Genius capable of shining in a much superior stile of Music.

THOUGH Music, considered in its useful application, to delight the ear and touch the passions of the bulk of Mankind, requires the utmost simplicity, yet, considered as
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an art, capable of giving a lasting and varied pleasure to the few, who from a stronger natural Taste devote part of their time and attention to its cultivation, it both admits, and requires variety, and even some degree of complication.—Not only the ear but the musical Taste becomes more delicate by cultivation.

WHEN the ear becomes acquainted with a variety of melodies, it begins by degrees to relish others, besides those which are national. A national melody may have expressions for only a few affections. A cultivated and enlarged Taste easily adopts a greater variety of expressions for these and other af-

VOL II. F fections,

fections, and learns, from the deepest recesses of harmony, to express some that have never been excited by any national Music.

WHEN one practises Music much, the simplicity of melody tires the ear. When he begins to hear an air he was formerly acquainted with, he immediately recollects the whole, and this anticipation often prevents his enjoying it. He requires therefore the assistance of harmony, which, without hurting the melody, gives a variety to the Music, and sometimes renders the melody more expressive.—Practice enables one to trace the subject of a complex Concerto, as it is carried through the several parts, which to

a common ear is an unmeaning jumble of sounds. Distinct from the pleasure which the ear receives here from the Music, there is another, which arises from the perception of the contrivance and ingenuity of the composer. — This enjoyment, it must be owned, is not of that heart-felt sort which simple Music alone can give, but of a more sober and sedate kind, which proves of longer duration: And it must be considered, that whatever touches the heart or the passions very sensibly, must be applied with a judicious and very sparing hand. — The sweetest and fullest chords must be seldom repeated, otherwise the certain effect

is satiety and disgust.—They who are best acquainted with the human heart, need not be told that this observation is not confined to Music.

ON the whole we may observe, that musical Genius consists in the invention of melody suited to produce a desired effect on the mind.—Musical Taste consists in conducting the melody with spirit and elegance, in such a manner as to produce this single effect in its full force.

JUDGMENT in Music is shewn in the contrivance of such harmonious accompaniments to the melody as may give it an additional energy, and a variety, without destroying its simplicity ;

simplicity ; in the preparation and resolution of discords ; and in the artful transitions from one key to another. — Taste in a performer consists in a knowledge of the composer's design, and expressing it in a spirited and pathetic manner, without any view of shewing the dexterity of his own execution.

BUT though all these circumstances of composition and performance should concur in any piece of Music, yet it must always fail in affecting the passions, unless its meaning and direction be ascertained by adapting it to sentiment and pathetic composition.

It exerts its greatest powers

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when used as an assistant to Poetry : hence the great superiority of vocal to instrumental Music, the human voice being capable of more justness, and at the same time of a more delicate musical expression, than any instrument whatever ; the perfection of an instrument depending on its nearest approach to it. Vocal Music is much confined by the language it is performed in. The harmony and sweetness of the Greek and Italian languages give them great advantages over the English and French, which are harsh, unmusical, and full of consonants ; and this, among other inconveniences,

occasions

occasions perpetual sacrifices of the quantity to the modulation *. This is one great cause of the slightness and want of variety of the French Music, which they in vain endeavour to cover and supply by laboured and complex accompaniments.

As vocal Music is the first and most natural Music of every country, it is reasonable to expect it to bear some analogy to the Poetry of the country, to which it is always adapted. — The remarkable superiority of the Scotch songs to the English, may in a great measure be accounted

* Rousseau.

for from this principle. The Scotch songs are simple and tender, full of strokes of Nature and Passion. So is their Music. Many of the English songs abound in quaint and childish conceits. They all aim at wit, and sometimes attain it; but Music has no expression for wit, and the Music of their songs is therefore flat and insipid, and so little esteemed by the English themselves, that it is in a perpetual fluctuation, and has never had any characteristic stile *.

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* Dr. Brown very ingeniously observes, that most countries peopled by colonies, which, after a certain period of civilization,

ON the other hand, England has produced many admirable composers of Church Music. Their great attachment to Counterpoint hath indeed often led them into a wrong track ; in other respects, they have shewn both Genius and Taste. — Religion opens the amplest field for musical, as well as poetical Genius ; it affords almost

tion, have issued from their native soil, possess no characteristic Music of their own ; that the Irish, Welsh, and Scotch are strictly natives, and accordingly have a Music of their own ; that the English, on the contrary, are a foreign mixture of late-established colonies, and, as a consequence of this, have no native Music ; and that the original Music of England must be sought for in Wales.

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all the variety of subjects, which Music can express; the sublime, the joyous, the chearful, the serene, the devout, the plaintive, the sorrowful. It likewise warms the heart with that enthusiasm so peculiarly necessary in all works of Genius. Accordingly our finest compositions in Music, are in the Church stile. Handel, far advanced in life, when his constitution and spirits seemed nearly exhausted, was so roused by this subject, that he exhibited proofs of extent and sublimity of Genius in his Messiah, superior to any he had shewn in his most vigorous period of life. We have another instance of the same kind

kind in Marcello, a noble Venetian, who set the first fifty Psalms to Music. In this work he has united the simplicity and pathos of the ancient Music with the grace and variety of the modern. In compliance with the Taste of the times he was sometimes forced to leave that simplicity of stile which he loved and admired, but by doing so he has enriched the art with a variety of the most expressive and unusual harmonies.

THE great object in vocal Music is to make the Music expressive of the sentiment. How little this is usually regarded appears by the practice of singing all the parts of a song to the same Music, though

though the sentiments and passions to be expressed be ever so different. If the Music has any character at all, this is a manifest violation of Taste and common sense, as it is obvious every different sentiment and passion should be expressed in a stile peculiarly suited to itself.

BUT the most common blunder in composers, who aim at expression, is their mistaking imitation for it.—

* MUSIC, considered as an imitative art, can imitate only sounds or motion, and this last but very imperfectly. A composer should

* See Harris and Avison.

make

make his Music expressive of the sentiment, and never have a reference to any particular word used in conveying that sentiment, which is a common practice, and really a miserable species of punning. Besides, where imitation is intended, it should generally be laid upon the instrumental accompaniments, which by their greater compass and variety are fitter to perform the imitation, while the voice is left at liberty to express the sentiment. When the imitation is laid upon the voice, it obliges it to a strained and unnatural exertion, and prevents the distinct articulation of the words, which it is necessary to preserve, in order to convey the

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meaning

meaning of the song. — Handel sometimes observed this very carefully, at other times, as his Genius or attention was very unequal, he entirely neglected it. In that beautiful song of the *Il Penseroso*,

“ Oft on a plat of rising ground,
 “ I hear the far-off curfew sound,”

he has thrown the imitation of the bell, with great art and success, into the symphony, and reserves the song entire for the expression of that pleasing tranquil melancholy, which the words so emphatically convey. He has shewn the same address in the celebrated song of *Acis and Galatea*,

“ Hush, ye little warbling quire,”
 where

where he has laid the imitation of the warbling of the birds upon the symphony and accompaniments, and preserves in the song that simplicity and languishing tenderness, which the subject of it particularly required. — On the other hand, in the song in Semele,

“ The morning lark to mine accords his
note,

“ And tunes to my distress his warbling
“ throat,”

he runs a long and laboured division on the word Warbling; and after all, the voice give but a very faint imitation of the warbling of the lark, though the violins in the symphony could have expressed it with great justness and delicacy.

In the union of Poetry and
Music,

Musick, the Musick should be subservient to the Poetry: the very reverse is the common practice; the Poetry is ever made subordinate to the Musick. Handel made those who composed the words of his Oratorios, alter and transpose them, as he thought best suited his Musick; and as no Man of Genius could submit to this, we generally find the Poetry the most wretched imaginable.

WE have frequently a more shocking instance of the little regard the composer has to the Poetry, and to the effect which should be left upon the Mind, in the unmeaning repetition of the first part of the Musick after the second. It frequently

frequently happens, that a succession of very opposite passions takes place in the course of a song; for instance, from anger to reconciliation and tenderness, with which the sense requires it should conclude; yet the composer sometimes constructs his Music in such a way, as requires a return from the second to the first part with which the song must end. This is not only a glaring absurdity in point of sense, but distracts the Mind by a most unnatural succession of passions.—

WE have another instance of the little regard paid to the ultimate end of Music, the affecting the heart and passions, in the univer-

fally allowed practice of making a long flourish or cadence at the close of a song, and sometimes at other periods of it. In this the performer is left at liberty to shew the utmost compass of his throat and execution; and all that is required, is, that he should conclude in the proper key; the performer accordingly takes this opportunity of shewing the audience the extent of his abilities, by the most fantastical and unmeaning extravagance of execution. The disgust which this gives to some, and the surprize which it excites in all the audience, breaks the tide of passion in the soul, and destroys all the effect which the composer

composer has been straining to produce.

It may be observed, that the loud applause so frequently given to pieces of Music, seldom implies any compliment either to the composition itself, or to the performer's just execution of it. They only express our admiration of the performer's fine shake, or swelling of a note, his power of protracting a note twice as long as another could do without losing his breath entirely, or of the variety of his cadence running out into the most extraneous modulation, and then artfully conducted to a proper conclusion in the key. But all these feats of art, the bet-

ter they are executed, and the greater surprize they excite, the more effectually do they destroy the impresson of the preceding Music, if it was ever capable of producing any. They are in general as little essential to good Music, as the tricks of a Harlequin are to that gracefulness, elegance, and dignity of movement, which constitute the perfection of dancing. The genuine applause bestowed on Music is to be sought for in the profound silence, in the emphatic looks, and in the tears of the audience.

OUR Oratorios labour under two disadvantages; their being deprived

of action and scenery; and their having no unity or design as a whole. They are little else than a collection of songs pretty much independent of one another. Now the effect of a dramatic performance does not depend on the effect of particular passages, considered by themselves, but on that artful construction, by which one part gives strength to another, and gradually works the Mind up to those sentiments and passions, which it was the design of the author to produce.

THE effects of Music depend upon many other circumstances besides its connection with Poetry. The effect, for instance, of Cathe-

dral Music depends greatly on its being properly adapted to the particular service of the day, and discourse of the preacher; and such a direction of it requires great taste and judgment. Yet this is never attended to: the whole conduct of it is left to the caprice of the organist, who makes it airy or grave, chearful or plaintive, as it suits his own fancy, and often degrades the solemnity and gravity suitable to divine worship, by the lightest and most trivial airs.

WE see the same want of public Taste in the Music performed between the acts in * Tragedy, where the tone of passion is often broke

* Elements of Criticism.

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in upon, and destroyed by airy and impertinent Music.

THE effect of Music may sometimes be lost by an unhappy association of ideas with the person and character of a performer. When we hear at the Oratorio an Italian eunuch squeaking forth the vengeance of divine wrath, or a gay lively strumpet pouring forth the complaint of a deeply penitent and contrite heart, we must be hurt by such an association.

THESE observations relate principally to the public Taste of Music in Britain, if the public here can be said to have any Taste in this subject.

I shall readily allow that Music,

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considered

considered merely as the art of affecting the ear agreeably by the power of sounds, is at present in a higher state than perhaps it has ever been in any period; that the principles of harmony were never so well ascertained; and that there never was at any time so great a number of performers, in every branch of the art, distinguished for the spirit, brilliancy, and elegance of their execution. But notwithstanding all these advantages, it appears to be a fact, of which all men of common sense and observation, whether learned in the science or not, are equally judges; that Music, considered as the art of deeply affecting the heart, and commanding

manding the passions by the power of sounds, is in a very low state, and that the principles on which these great and important effects depend, are either unknown or neglected. Of late years several composers of the highest rank seem to have been very sensible of this capital defect of our modern Music. In Italy particularly, that native country of all the elegant arts, a chastity, a simplicity and pathos of style has been cultivated by some eminent masters, and successfully imitated by others in different parts of Europe. But the evil I complain of seems too complicated and too deeply rooted to admit now of a cure. The rage
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for variety is so excessive, and the Taste, of course, so indiscriminating, that composers and performers, who depend on the public for their subsistence, must satisfy it with any food they can procure, if it has only Novelty to recommend it.

The wild effusions of unbridled fancy, are often honoured with the titles of invention, spirit, and genius; and Taste seems in general to mean nothing but an attachment to what is new, and a contempt for whatever is old in Music. Hence it seems to be now very generally admitted, that there are no fixt principles of Taste in Music, as in the other fine Arts, and that

it has no foundation but in caprice and fashion. But I conceive that the principles of just Taste in this Art, are as permanently founded in truth and human Nature, as those of any art or science whatever, and that the principles may be as certainly ascertained by collecting and arranging the genuine feelings of Nature. The principles which deserve the chief attention, as being the first in point of dignity and utility, are those which relate to the power of Music, in commanding the passions; next to these, the principle of the art exercised merely with the view of amusement, by a transient gratification of the ear, should be examined

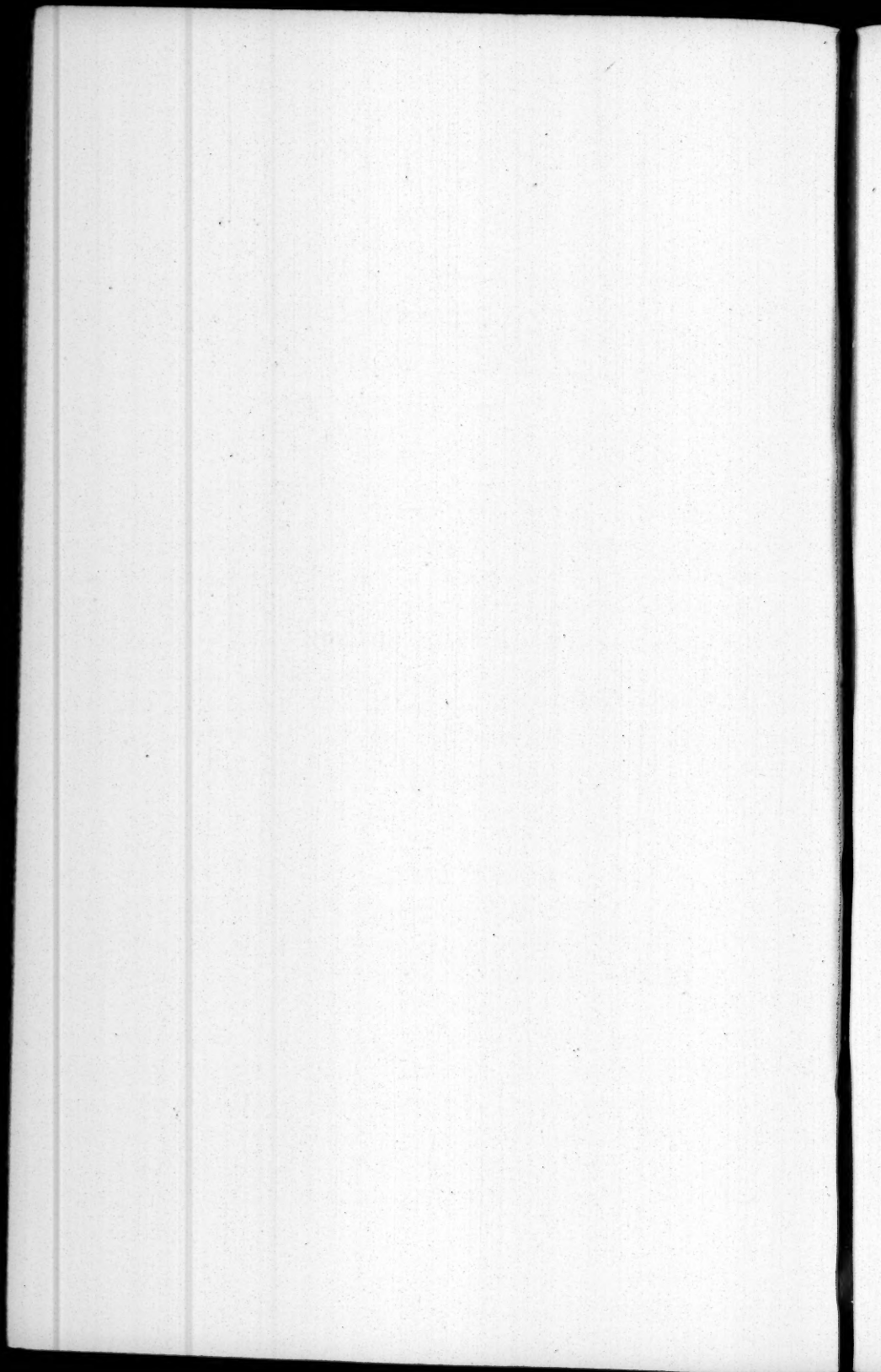
mined and ascertained ; and in the last and lowest place, the simple powers of execution may be considered as employed with the sole view of exciting surprize and admiration of the performer's abilities.

I could not pursue this subject farther without entering deeply into the intricacies of the technical part of Music, which I have carefully endeavoured to avoid. My design was only to shew, that Taste in Music has its foundation in Nature and common sense; that its noblest powers have been neglected, and that Men of sense and genius should not imagine they want an ear or a musical Taste, because they do not relish much of the modern Music,

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as in many cases this is rather a proof of the goodness of both.

AFTER all, it cannot be expected, that either Music, or any of the fine arts, will ever be cultivated in such a manner as to make them useful and subservient to life, till the natural union be restored which so happily subsisted between them and philosophy in ancient days; when philosophy not only gave to the world the most accomplished generals and statesmen, but presided with the greatest lustre and dignity over Rhetoric, Poetry, Music, and all the elegant arts that polish and adorn Mankind.





SECTION IV.

IT was formerly observed, that the pleasures arising from works of Taste and Imagination were confined to a small part of Mankind, and that although the foundations of a good Taste are laid in Human Nature, yet without culture it never becomes a considerable source of pleasure. As we formerly made a few observations on the real effects produced

produced by a cultivated Taste in some of the fine arts, we shall proceed to consider its influence on the pleasure arising from such works of Genius as are in a particular manner addressed to the Imagination and the Heart. This pleasure, in the earlier part of life, is often extremely high. Youth indeed has peculiar advantages in this respect. The Imagination is then lively and vigorous, the Heart warm and feeling, equally open to the joyous impressions of wit and humour, the force of the sublime, and every softer and more delicate sentiment of humanity. It is matter of real concern to observe the gradual decay of this innocent and rich

rich source of enjoyment, together with many others equally pure and natural.—Nature, it is true, has allotted different pleasures to different periods of life: but there is no reason to think, that Nature has totally excluded any period from those pleasures of which we are now treating.

WE have already lamented that many of the useful sciences as well as fine arts were left entirely in the hands of Men unassisted with learning and philosophy; but there is some reason to suspect, that these assistances have commonly been applied to works of Taste and Imagination in such a manner, as has rather weakened than added to their force

and influence.—This subject is interesting, and deserves a particular discussion.

THE Imagination, like every thing in nature, is subjected to general and fixt laws, which can only be discovered by experience. But it is no easy matter precisely to ascertain these laws. The subject is so fleeting, so various in different countries, in different constitutions of Men, and even in the same person in different periods and situations in life, that it requires the talents of a person of the most enlarged knowledge of Mankind, to reduce its laws to any kind of system; and this person likewise must be possessed of the most delicate

cate sensibility of Heart and Imagination, otherwise he cannot understand what he is employed about. —Such a system of laws, particularly relating to dramatic and epic Poetry, was formed by some great Men of antiquity, and has been since very universally adopted. Light has thereby been thrown on some of the great principles of criticism; and rules have been established, founded on the experience of such beauties as were discovered to please most universally. But without detracting from the merit of the ancient critics, it must be observed, that nothing tends more to check the improvement of any art or science, than the reducing

all its principles too hastily into a regular system. The bulk of Mankind are incapable of thinking or judging for themselves on any subject. There are a few leading spirits whom the rest must follow. This makes systems so universally acceptable. If they cannot teach people to think and to feel, they teach them what to say, which answers all the purposes of the most universally ruling passion among Mankind, Vanity.

THESE observations are particularly applicable to systems and rules of criticism. When these are considered as assistances merely to the operations of Taste; as giving proper openings for the discernment
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of beauty, by collecting and arranging the feelings of Nature, they promote the improvement of the fine arts. But when they are considered as fixed and established standards, from which there lies no further appeal; when they would impose upon us the weight of authority, and fix a precise and narrow line, beyond which works of Imagination must not stray; in this case they do infinitely more harm than good. Taste, of all the powers of the Mind, is least suited to and most impatient of such strict confinement. Some general principles may be pointed out, but to dream of applying always the square and the compass to such thin and

delicate feelings, as those of the Imagination, is a vain attempt. Add to this, that all criticism must, in a certain degree, be temporary and local.

SOME tempers, and even some nations, are most pleased with Nature in her fairest and most regular forms, while others admire her in the great, the wonderful, and the wild. Thus elegance, regularity, and sentiment are chiefly attended to in France, and French criticism principally regards these; but its rules can with no propriety be applied in England, where the natural Genius or Taste of the people is very different. The grand, the sublime, the surprising, and what-

ever very forcibly strikes the Imagination, ought there to be principally regarded. Where these are wanting, the utmost elegance and propriety will appear cold and insipid: where these are found, elegance and propriety can be in a good measure dispensed with.

WHENEVER what is called a very correct Taste generally prevails, the powers of Genius and Invention gradually languish; and the constant attention to prevent giving offence to a few, renders it impossible to give much pleasure to any.

REFINEMENT and delicacy of Taste is an acquisition very dangerous and deceitful. It flatters our pride by giving us a conscious su-

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periority over the rest of Mankind, and, by specious promises of enjoyment unknown to vulgar Minds, often cheats us out of those pleasures, which are equally attainable by the whole species, and which Nature intended every one should enjoy. People possessed of extreme delicacy are haunted as it were with an evil Genius, by certain ideas of the coarse, the low, the vulgar, the irregular, which strike them in all the natural pleasures of life, and render them incapable of enjoying them.

THERE is scarcely an external or internal sense but may be brought, by constant indulgence and attention, to such a degree of acuteness

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as to be disgusted at every object that is presented to it.—This extreme sensibility and refinement, though at first usually produced by vanity and affectation, yet by a constant attention to all the little circumstances that feed them, soon become real and genuine. But Nature has set bounds to all our pleasures. We may enjoy them safely within these bounds, but if we refine too much upon them, the certain consequence is disappointment and chagrin.

WHEN such a false delicacy, or, what has much the same effect, when the affectation of it becomes generally prevalent, it checks, in works of Taste, all vigorous efforts
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of Genius and Imagination, enervates the force of language, and produces that mediocrity, that coldness and insipidity of composition, which does not indeed greatly disgust, but never can give high pleasure. This is one bad effect of criticism falling into wrong hands; especially when Men possessed of mere learning and abstract philosophy condescend to bestow their attention on works of Taste and Imagination. As such Men are sometimes deficient in those powers of Fancy, and that sensibility of Heart, which are essential to the relishing such subjects, they are too often apt to despise and condemn those things of which they have

no right to judge, as they are neither able to perceive, nor to feel them.

A clear and acute Understanding is far from being the only quality necessary to form a perfect critic. The Heart is often more concerned here than the Head. In general, it seems the more proper business of true philosophical criticism to observe and watch the excursions of fancy at a distance, than to be continually checking all its little irregularities. Too much restraint and pruning is of more fatal consequence here than a little wildness and luxuriancy.

THE * beauties of every work

* Musæum, vol. I.

of

of Taste are of different degrees, and so are its blemishes. The greatest blemish is the want of such beauties as are characteristic, and essential to its kind. Thus in dramatic Poetry one part may be constructed according to the laws of unity and truth, whilst another directly contradicts them. The French, by their great attention to the general œconomy and unity of their fable, and the construction of their scenes, have universally obtained the character of superior correctness to the English. Their reputation in this respect is well founded. In their dramatic writings we meet with much less that offends: and it must also be acknowledged,

knowledged, that, besides mere regularity of construction, they possess in a high degree the merit of beautiful Poetry and tender sentiments. But when we examine them in another light, we find them excelled by the English. There is a want of force, often a degree of languor, even in their best pieces. The speeches are generally too long and declamatory, the sentiments too fine-spun, and the character enervated by a certain French appearance with which they are apt to be marked. Whereas, in the English theatre, if there be less elegance and regularity, there is more fire, more force, and more strength. The passions speak more their own
native

native language; and the characters are drawn with a coarser indeed, but however with a bolder hand. —Shakespeare, by his lively creative Imagination, his strokes of Nature and Passion, and by preserving the consistency of his characters, amply compensates for his transgressions against the rules of time and place, with which the Imagination can easily dispense. His frequently breaking the tide of the Passions, by the introduction of low and absurd comedy, is a more capital transgression against Nature and the fundamental laws of the drama.

PROBABILITY is one of the boundaries, within which it has pleased criticism to confine the Imagination.

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This appears plausible, but upon enquiry will perhaps be found too severe a restraint. It is observed by the ingenious and elegant Author of the *Adventurer*, that events may appear to our reason not only improbable, but absurd and impossible, whilst yet the Imagination may adopt them with facility and delight. The time was, when an universal belief prevailed of invisible agents interesting themselves in the affairs of this world. Many events were supposed to happen out of the ordinary course of things by the supernatural agency of these spirits, who were believed to be of different ranks, and of different dispositions towards Mankind.

Such

Such a belief was well adapted to make a deep impresson on some of the most powerful principles of our Nature, to gratify the natural passion for the marvellous, to dilate the Imagination, and to give boundless scope to its excursions.

IN those days the old Romance was in its highest glory. And though a belief of the interposition of these invisible powers in the ordinary affairs of Mankind has now ceased, yet it still keeps its hold of the Imagination, which has a natural propensity to embrace this opinion. Hence we find that Oriental tales continue to be universally read and admired, by those who have not the least belief in the Genii,
 who

who are the most important agents in the story. All that we require in these works of Imagination is an unity and consistency of character*. The Imagination willingly allows itself to be deceived into a belief of the existence of beings, which reason sees to be ridiculous; but then every event must take place in such a regular manner as may be naturally expected from the interposition of such superior intelligence and power. It is not a single violation of truth and probability that offends, but such a violation as perpetually recurs. We have a strong evidence of the facility with which the Imagination is deceived,

* Adventurer.

in the effects produced by a well-acted Tragedy. The Imagination there soon becomes too much heated, and the Passions too much interested, to permit reason to reflect that we are agitated with the feigned distress of people entirely at their ease. We suffer ourselves to be transported from place to place, and believe we are hearing the private soliloquy of a person in his chamber, while he is talking on a stage so as to be heard by thousands.

THE deception in our modern Novels is more perfect than in the old Romance; but as they profess to paint Nature and Characters as they really are, it is evident that

the powers of fancy cannot have the same play, nor can the succession of incidents be so quick nor so surprizing. It requires therefore a Genius of the first class to give them that spirit and variety so necessary to captivate the Imagination, and to preserve them from sinking into dry narrative and tiresome declamation.

NOTWITHSTANDING the ridiculous extravagance of the old Romance in many particulars, it seems calculated to produce more favourable effects on the morals of Mankind, than our modern Novels.— If the former did not represent Men as they really are, it represented them as they ought to be; its

heroes were patterns of courage, generosity, truth, humanity, and the most exalted virtues. Its heroines were distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and the utmost dignity of manners. — The latter represent Mankind too much what they are, paint such scenes of pleasure and vice as ought never to see the light, and thus in a manner hackney youth in the ways of wickedness, before they are well entered into the world; expose the fair sex in the most wanton and shameless manner to the eyes of the world, by stripping them of that modest reserve, which is the foundation of grace and dignity, the veil with which Nature intended to protect them from too familiar

familiar an eye, in order to be at once the greatest incitement to love and the greatest security to virtue.

—In short, the one may mislead the Imagination; the other tends to inflame the Passions and to corrupt the Heart.

The pleasure which we receive from History arises in a great measure from the same source with that which we receive from Romance. It is not the bare recital of facts that gives us pleasure. They must be facts that give some agitation to the Mind by their being important, interesting, or surprizing. But events of this kind do not very frequently occur in History, nor does it descend to paint those minute

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features.

features of particular persons which are more likely to engage our affections and interest our passions than the fate of nations. It is not therefore surprizing that we find it so difficult to keep attention awake in reading History, and that fewer have succeeded in this kind of composition than in any other. To render History pleasing and interesting, it is not enough that it be strictly impartial, that it be written with the utmost elegance of language, and abound in the most judicious and uncommon observations. We are never agreeably interested in a History, till we contract an attachment to some public and important cause, or some distinguished

distinguished characters which it represents to us. The fate of these engages the attention and keeps the Mind in an anxious yet pleasing suspense. Nor do we require the author to violate the truth of History, by representing our favourite cause or hero as perfect; we will allow him to represent all their weaknesses and imperfections, but still it must be with such a tender and delicate hand as not to destroy our attachment. There is a sort of unity or consistency of character that we expect even in History. An author of any ingenuity can, if he pleases, easily disappoint this expectation, without deviating from truth. There are certain features

in the greatest and worthiest Men, which may be painted in such a light as to make their characters appear little and ridiculous. Thus if an Historian be constantly attentive to check admiration, it is certainly in his power; but if the Mind be thus continually disappointed, and can never find an object that may be contemplated with pleasure, though we may admire his Genius, and be instructed by his History, he will never leave a pleasing and grateful impression on the Mind. Where this is the prevailing spirit and genius of a History, it not only deprives us of a great part of the pleasure we expected from it, but leaves disagreeable effects

effects on the Mind, as it stifles that noble enthusiasm, which is the foundation of all great actions, and produces a fatal scepticism, coldness, and indifference about all characters and principles whatsoever. We acknowledge indeed that this manner of writing may be of great service in correcting the narrow prejudices of party and faction; as they will be more influenced by the representations of one who seems to take no side, than by any thing which can be said by their antagonists.

BUT the principal and most important end of History, is to promote the interests of Liberty and Virtue, and not merely to gratify curiosity.

curiosity. Impartial History will always be favourable to these interests. The elegance of its stile and composition, is chiefly to be valued, as it serves to engage the reader's attention. But if an Historian has no regard to what we here suppose should be the ultimate ends of History, if he considers it only as calculated to give an exercise and amusement to the Mind, he may undoubtedly make his work answer a very different purpose. The circumstances that attend all great events are so complicated, and the weaknesses and inconsistencies of every human character, however exalted and amiable, are so various, that an ingenious

nious writer has an opportunity of placing them in a point of view that may suit whatever cause he chooses to espouse. Under the specious pretence of a regard to truth, and a superiority to vulgar prejudices, he may render the best cause doubtful, and the most respectable character ambiguous. This may be easily done without any absolute deviation from Truth; by only suppressing some circumstances, and giving a high colouring to others; by taking advantage of the frivolous and dissolute spirit of the age, which delights in seeing the most sacred and important subjects turned into ridicule; and by insinuations that convey, in the

the strongest manner, sentiments which the Author, from affected fear of the laws, or a pretended delicate regard to established opinions, seems unwilling fully and clearly to express. Of all the methods that have been used to shake those principles on which the virtue, the liberties, and the happiness of Mankind depend, this is the most dangerous as well as the most illiberal and disingenuous. It is impossible to confute a hint, or to answer an objection that is not fully and explicitly stated. There is a certain species of impartiality with which no man, who has good principles, or a sensible heart, will sit down to write History; that

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impartiality.

impartiality, which supposes an absolute indifference to whatever may be its consequences on the minds of the readers. Such an indifference, in regard to the result of our enquiries, is natural and proper in the abstract Sciences, and in those Philosophical disquisitions, where truth is the single and ultimate object, not connected with any thing that may engage the affections or essentially affect the interests of Mankind. But a candid Historian, who is the friend of Mankind, will disclaim this coldness and insensibility: He will openly avow his attachment to the cause of liberty and virtue, and will consider the subserviency of his History to
their

their interests as its highest merit and honour. He will be persuaded that Truth, that impartial History, can never hurt these sacred interests; but he will never pretend so far to divest himself of the feelings of a Man, as to be indifferent whether they do or not.

A lively Imagination, and particularly a poetical one, bears confinement no-where so ill as in the use of Metaphor and Imagery. This is the peculiar province of the Imagination. The soundest head can neither assist nor judge in it. The Poet's eye, as it * *glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven*, is struck with numberless simili-

* Shakespear.

tudes

tudes and analogies, that not only pass unnoticed by the rest of Mankind, but cannot even be comprehended when suggested to them. There is a correspondence between certain external forms of Nature, and certain affections of the Mind, that may be felt, but cannot always be explained. Sometimes the association may be accidental, but it often seems to be innate. Hence the great difficulty of ascertaining the true sublime. It cannot in truth be confined within any bounds; it is entirely relative, depending on the warmth and liveliness of the Imagination, and therefore different in different countries. For the same reason, wherever
there

there is great richness and profusion of Imagery, which in some species of Poetry is a principal beauty, there are always very general complaints of obscurity, which is increased by those sudden transitions that bewilder a common reader, but are easily traced by a poetical one. An accurate scrutiny into the propriety of Images and Metaphors is fruitless. If it be not felt at first, it can seldom be communicated: while we endeavour to analyse it, the impression vanishes. The same observation may be applied to Wit, which consists in a quick and unexpected assemblage of ideas, that strike the Mind in an agreeable manner either
by

by their resemblance or their incongruity. Neither is the justness of humour a subject that will bear reasoning. This consists in a lively painting of those weaknesses of character, which are not of importance enough to raise pity or indignation, but only excite mirth and laughter. One must have an idea of the original to judge of, or be affected by the representation, and if he does not see its justness at the first glance, he never sees it. For this reason most works of humour, ridicule, and satire, which paint the particular features and manners of the times, being local and transient, quickly lose their poignancy, and become obscure and insipid.

WHATEVER is the object of Imagination and Taste can only be seen to advantage at a certain distance, and in a particular light. If brought too near the eye, the beauty which charmed before appears faded, and often distorted. It is therefore the business of judgment to ascertain this point of view, to exhibit the object to the Mind in that position which gives it most pleasure, and to prevent the Mind from viewing it in any other. This is generally very much in our own power. It is an art which we all practise in common life. We learn by habit to turn to the eye the agreeable side of any object which gives us pleasure, and to keep the
dark

dark one out of sight. If this be kept within any reasonable bounds, the soundest judgment will not only connive at, but approve it.—Whatever we admire or love, as great, or beautiful, or amiable, has certain circumstances belonging to it, which, if attended to, would poison our enjoyment.—We are agreeably struck with the grandeur and magnificence of Nature in her wildest forms, with the prospect of vast and stupendous mountains; but is there any necessity for our attending, at the same time, to the bleakness, the coldness, and the barrenness, which are universally connected with them? When a lover contemplates with rapture

the charms of beauty and elegance, that captivate his heart, need he at the same time reflect how uncertain and transient the object of his passion is, and that the succession of a few years must lay it mouldering in the dust?

BUT we not only think it unnecessary always to see the whole truth, but frequently allow and justify ourselves in viewing things magnified beyond the truth. We indulge a manifest partiality to our friends, to our children, and to our native country. We not only keep their failings, as much as prudence will justify, out of sight, but we exalt in our Imagination all their good qualities beyond their just value.

value. Nor does the general sense of Mankind condemn this indulgence; for this very good reason, because it is natural, and because we could not forego it, without losing at the same time all sense of friendship, natural affection, and patriotism.—There appears no sufficient reason why this conduct, which we observe in common life, should not be followed in our enquiries into works of Imagination. A person of a cultivated Taste, while he resigns himself to the first impressions of pleasure excited by real excellence, can at the same time, with the slightest glance of the eye, perceive whether the work will bear a nearer inspection. If it

can bear this, he has an additional pleasure, arising from those latent beauties which strike the Imagination less forcibly. If he finds they cannot bear this examination, he should remove his attention immediately, and he should gratefully enjoy the pleasure he has already received.

A correct Taste is very much offended with Dr. Young's Night Thoughts; it observes that the representation there given of Human Life is false and gloomy; that the Poetry sometimes sinks into childish conceits or prosaic flatness, but oftener rises into the turgid or false sublime; that it is perplexed and obscure; that the reasoning is often

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weak;

weak ; and that the general plan of the work is ill laid, and not happily conducted.—Yet this work may be read with very different sentiments. It may be found to contain many touches of the most sublime Poetry that any language has produced, and to be full of those pathetic strokes of Nature and Passion, which touch the heart in the most tender and affecting manner.—

BESIDES, the Mind is sometimes in a disposition to be pleased only with dark views of Human Life.

THERE are afflictions too deep to bear either reasoning or amusement. They may be soothed, but cannot be diverted. The gloom

of the Night Thoughts perfectly corresponds with this state of Mind. It indulges and flatters the present passion, and at the same time presents those motives of consolation which alone can render certain griefs supportable.—We may here observe that secret and wonderful endearment, which Nature has annexed to all our sympathetic feelings. We enter into the deepest scenes of distress and sorrow with a melting softness of Heart, far more delightful than all the joys which dissipated and unthinking mirth can inspire. * Dr. Akenfide describes this very pathetically.

* Pleasures of Imagination.

-----Aft

————— Ask the faithful youth,
Why the cold urn of her, whom long he
loved,

So often fills his arms ; so often draws
His lonely footsteps at the silent hour,
To pay the mournful tribute of his
tears ?

Oh ! he will tell thee, that the wealth
of worlds

Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego
That sacred hour, when stealing from the
noise

Of care and envy, sweet remembrance
sooths

With virtue's kindest looks his aching
breast,

And turns his tears to rapture.

He afterwards proceeds to paint,
with all the enthusiasm of liberty
and poetic Genius, and in all the
sweetness and harmony of numbers,
those

those heart-ennobling sorrows, which the Mind feels by the representation of the present miserable condition of those countries, which were once the happy seats of Genius, Liberty, and the greatest virtues that adorn humanity.

WHAT ought chiefly to be regarded in the culture of Taste is to discover those many beauties, in the works of Nature and Art, which would otherwise escape our notice. Thomson, in that beautiful descriptive poem, the Seasons, pleases from the justness of his painting; but his greatest merit consists in impressing the Mind with numberless beauties of Nature, in her various and successive forms, which
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formerly passed unheeded.—This is the most pleasing and useful effect of criticism; to display new sources of pleasure unknown to the bulk of Mankind; and it is only so far as it discovers these, that Taste can with reason be accounted a blessing.

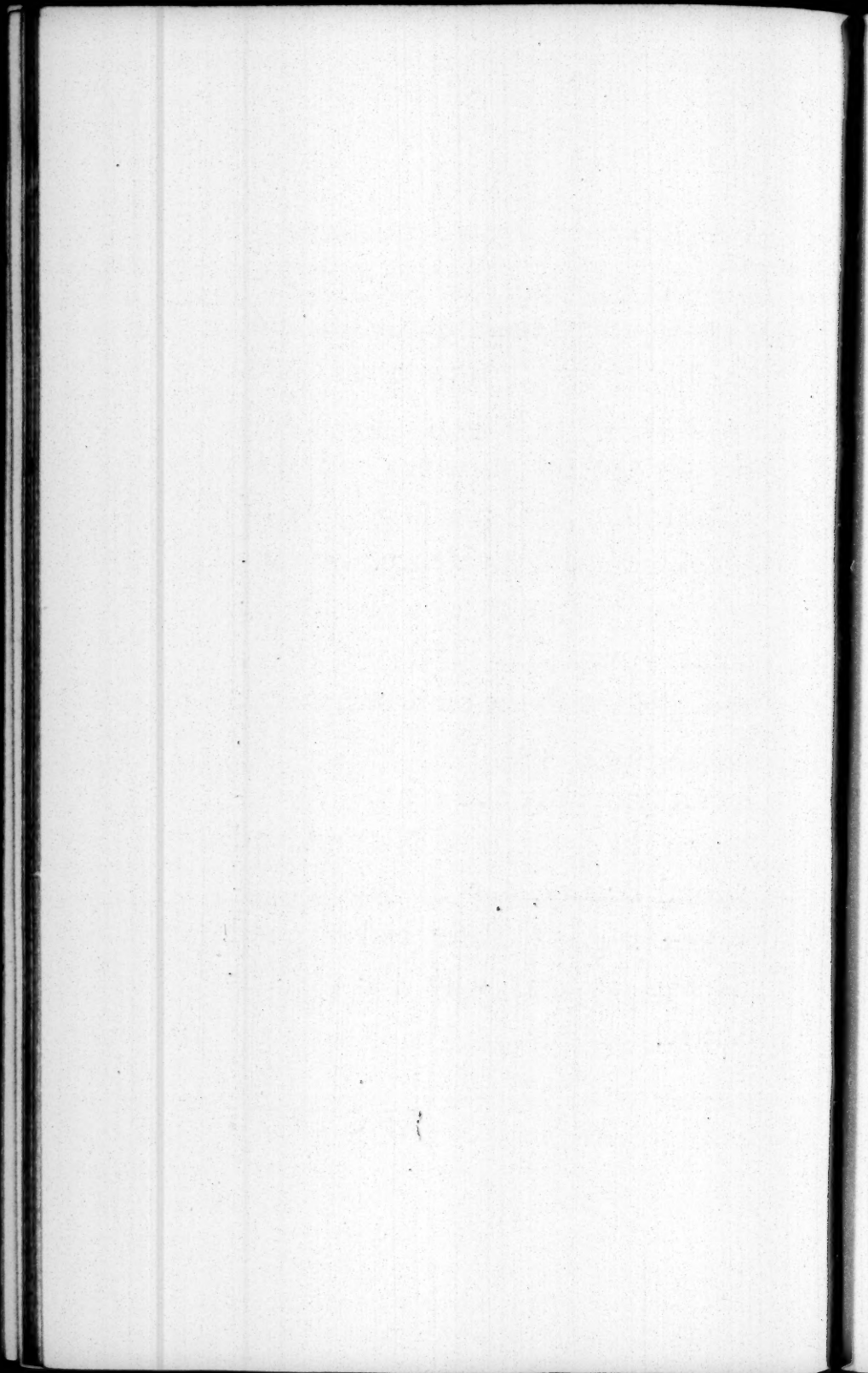
It has been often observed that a good Taste and a good Heart commonly go together. But that sort of Taste, which is constantly prying into blemishes and deformity, can have no good effect either on the Temper or the Heart. The Mind naturally takes a taint from those objects and pursuits in which it is usually employed. Disgust, often recurring, spoils the
Temper,

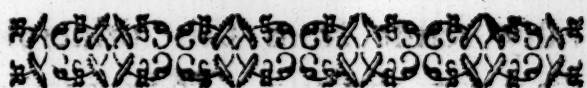
Temper, and a habit of nicely discriminating, when carried into real life, contracts the **H**eart, and, by holding up to view the faults and weaknesses inseparable from every character, not only checks all the benevolent and generous affections, but stifles all the pleasing emotions of love and admiration.

THE habit of dwelling too much on what is ridiculous in subjects of Taste, when transferred into life, has likewise a bad effect upon the character, if not softened by a large portion of humanity and good humour, as it confers only a fullen and gloomy pleasure, by feeding the worst and most painful feelings of the human heart, envy and malignity.

nity. But an intimate acquaintance with the works of Nature and Genius, in their most beautiful and amiable forms, humanizes and sweetens the Temper, opens and extends the Imagination, and disposes to the most pleasing views of Mankind and Providence. By considering Nature in this favourable point of view, the Heart is dilated, and filled with the most benevolent sentiments; and then indeed the secret sympathy and connection between the feelings of Natural and Moral Beauty, the connection between a good Taste and a good Heart, appears with the greatest lustre.

SECTION





S E C T I O N V.

WE proceed now to consider that principle of Human Nature which seems in a peculiar manner the characteristic of the species, the Sense of Religion. It is not my intention here to consider the evidence of Religion as founded in truth; I propose only to examine it as a principle founded in Human Nature, and the influence it actually has, or may have, on the happiness

ness of Mankind.—The beneficial consequences which should naturally result from this principle, seem very obvious. There is something peculiarly soothing and comfortable in a firm belief that the whole frame of Nature is supported and conducted by an eternal and omnipotent Being, of infinite goodness, who intends, by the whole course of his providence, to promote the greatest good of all his creatures; a belief that we are acquainted with the means of conciliating the Divine favor, and that in consequence of this we have it in our own power to obtain it; a belief that this life is but the infancy of our existence, that we shall sur-

vive the seeming destruction of our present frame, and have it in our power to secure our entrance on a new state of eternal felicity. If we believe that the conduct which the Deity requires of us is such as most effectually secures our present happiness, together with the peace and happiness of society, we should of course conclude that these sentiments would be fondly cherished and adopted by all wise and good Men, whether they were supposed to arise from any natural anticipation of the Human Mind, the force of Reason, or an immediate revelation from the Supreme Being.

BUT though the belief of a Deity and of a future state of existence

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have

have universally prevailed in all ages and nations, yet it has been diversified and connected with a variety of superstitions, which have often rendered it useless, and sometimes hurtful to the general interests of Mankind. The Supreme Being has sometimes been represented in such a light, as made him rather an object of terror than of love; as executing both present and eternal vengeance on the greatest part of the world, for crimes they never committed, and for not believing doctrines which they never heard.—Men have been taught that they did God acceptable service by abstracting themselves from all the duties they owed
to

to society, by denying themselves all the pleasures of life, and even by voluntarily enduring and inflicting on themselves the severest tortures which Nature could support. They have been taught that it was their duty to persecute their fellow-creatures in the most cruel manner, in order to bring them to an uniformity with themselves in religious opinions; a scheme equally barbarous and impracticable. In fine, Religion has often been used as an engine to deprive Mankind of their most valuable privileges, and to subject them to the most despotic tyranny.

THESE pernicious consequences have given occasion to some inge-

nious Men to question, whether Atheism or Superstition were most destructive to the happiness of society; while others have been so much impressed by them, that they seemed to entertain no doubt of its being safer to divest Mankind of all religious opinions and restraints whatever, than to run the risk of the abuses which they thought almost inseparable from them.—This seems to be the most favorable construction that can be put on the conduct of the patrons of Atheism. But however specious this pretence might have been some centuries ago, there does not at this time appear to be the least foundation for it. Experience has now shewn
that

that Religion may subsist in a public establishment, divested of that absurd and pernicious Superstition which was only adventitious, and most apparently contrary to its genuine and original spirit and genius.—To separate Religion entirely from Superstition, in every individual, may indeed be impossible, because it is impossible to make all Mankind think wisely and properly on any one subject, where the Understanding alone is concerned, much more where the Imagination and the Affections are so deeply interested. But if the positive advantages of Religion to Mankind be evident, this should seem a sufficient reason for every worthy Man

to support its cause, and at the same time to keep it disengaged from those accidental circumstances that have so highly dishonoured it.

MANKIND certainly have a sense of right and wrong, independent of religious belief; but experience shews, that the allurements of present pleasure, and the impetuosity of passion are sufficient to prevent Men from acting agreeably to this moral sense, unless it be supported by Religion, the influence of which upon the Imagination and Passions, if properly directed, is extremely powerful.

WE shall readily acknowledge that many of the greatest enemies
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of Religion have been distinguished for their honour, probity, and good-nature. But it is to be considered, that many virtues as well as vices are constitutional. A cool and equal Temper, a dull Imagination, and unfeeling Heart, ensure the possession of many virtues, or rather are a security against many vices. They may produce temperance, chastity, honesty, prudence, and a harmless, inoffensive behaviour. Whereas keen Passions, a warm Imagination, and great sensibility of Heart, lay a natural foundation for prodigality, debauchery, and ambition; attended, however, with the seeds of all the social and most heroic virtues. Such

a temperature of Mind carries along with it a check to its constitutional vices, by rendering those possessed of it peculiarly susceptible of religious impressions. They often appear indeed to be the greatest enemies to Religion, but that is entirely owing to their impatience of its restraints. Its most dangerous enemies have ever been among the temperate and chaste philosophers, void of passion and sensibility, who had no vicious appetites to be restrained by its influence, and who were equally unsusceptible of its terrors or its pleasures. Absolute Infidelity or settled Scepticism in Religion we acknowledge is no proof of want of Understanding or

a vicious disposition, but is certainly a very strong presumption of the want of Imagination and sensibility of Heart, and of a perverted Understanding. Some philosophers have been Infidels, few Men of taste and sentiment. Yet the examples of Lord Bacon, Mr. Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton, among many other first names in philosophy, are a sufficient evidence that religious belief is perfectly compatible with the clearest and most enlarged Understanding.

SEVERAL of those who have surmounted what they call religious prejudices themselves, affect to treat such as are not ashamed to
avow

avow their regard to Religion, as Men of weak Understandings and feeble Minds. But this shews either want of candor or great ignorance of Human Nature. The fundamental articles of Religion have been very generally believed by Men the most distinguished for acuteness and accuracy of judgment. Nay, it is unjust to infer the weakness of a person's head on other subjects from his attachment even to the fooleries of Superstition. Experience shews that when the Imagination is heated, and the Affections deeply interested, they level all distinctions of Understanding; yet this affords no presumption of a shallow

a shallow judgment in subjects where the Imagination and Passions have no influence.

FEEBLENESS of Mind is a reproach frequently thrown, not only upon such as have a sense of Religion, but upon all who possess warm, open, chearful Tempers, and Hearts peculiarly disposed to love and friendship. But the reproach is ill founded. Strength of Mind does not consist in a peevish Temper, in a hard inflexible Heart, and in bidding defiance to God Almighty. It consists in an active resolute Spirit, in a Spirit that enables a Man to act his part in the world with propriety, and to bear the misfortunes of life with uniform fortitude

fortitude and dignity. This is a strength of Mind which neither Atheism nor universal Scepticism will ever be able to inspire. On the contrary, their tendency will be found to chill all the powers of Imagination; to depress Spirit as well as Genius; to sour the Temper and contract the Heart. The highest religious spirit, and veneration for Providence breathes in the writings of the ancient Stoics; a sect distinguished for producing the most active, intrepid, virtuous Men that ever did honour to Human Nature.

CAN it be pretended that Atheism or Universal Scepticism have any tendency to form such characters?

racters? Do they tend to inspire
 that magnanimity and elevation of
 Mind, that superiority to selfish
 and sensual gratifications, that con-
 tempt of danger and of death,
 when the cause of virtue, of li-
 berty, or their country require it,
 which distinguish the characters of
 Patriots and Heroes? or is their in-
 fluence more favorable on the
 humbler and gentler virtues of
 private and domestic life? Do they
 soften the heart, and render it more
 delicately sensible of the thousand
 nameless duties and endearments of
 a Husband, a Father, or a Friend?
 Do they produce that habitual se-
 renity and cheerfulness of temper,
 that gaiety of heart, which makes
 a Man

a Man beloved as a Companion?
 or do they dilate the heart with
 the liberal and generous sentiments,
 and that love of human kind,
 which would render him revered
 and blessed as the patron of depre-
 sed merit, the friend of the wi-
 dow and orphan, the refuge and
 support of the poor and the un-
 happy?

THE general opinion of Man-
 kind, that there is a strong con-
 nection between a religious dispo-
 sition and a feeling Heart, appears
 from the universal dislike, which
 all Men have to Infidelity in the
 fair sex. We not only look on
 it as removing the principal secu-
 rity we have for their virtue, but

as the strongest proof of their want of that softness and delicate sensibility of Heart, which peculiarly endears them to us, and more effectually secures their empire over us, than any quality they can possess.

THERE are indeed some Men who can persuade themselves, that there is no Supreme Intelligence who directs the course of Nature; who can see those they have been connected with by the strongest bonds of Nature and Friendship gradually disappearing; who are persuaded that this separation is final and eternal, and who expect that they themselves shall soon sink down after them into nothing; and
yet

yet such Men appear easy and contented. But to a sensible Heart, and particularly to a Heart softened by past endearments of Love or Friendship, such opinions are attended with gloom inexpressible; they strike a damp into all the pleasures and enjoyments of life, and cut off those Prospects which alone can comfort the soul under certain distresses, where all other aid is feeble and ineffectual.

SCEPTICISM, or suspension of judgment as to the truth of the great articles of Religion, is attended with the same fatal effects. Wherever the Affections are deeply interested, a state of suspension is more intolerable, and more distracting to the
Mind.

Mind, than the sad assurance of the evil which is most dreaded.

THERE are many who have past the age of Youth and Beauty, who have resigned the Pleasures of that smiling season; who begin to decline into the vale of Years, impaired in their Health, depressed in their Fortunes, stript of their Friends, their Children, and perhaps, still more tender and endearing connections. What resource can this world afford them? It presents a dark and dreary waste, thro' which there does not issue a single ray of comfort. Every delusive prospect of Ambition is now at an end; long experience of Mankind, an experience very different

from what the open and generous soul of youth had fondly dreamt of, has rendered the Heart almost inaccessible to new Friendships. The principal sources of Activity are taken away, when those for whom we labour are cut off from us, those who animated, and those who sweetened all the toils of life. Where then can the soul find refuge, but in the bosom of Religion? There she is admitted to those prospects of Providence and Futurity, which alone can warm and fill the Heart. I speak here of such as retain the feelings of Humanity, whom Misfortunes have softened and perhaps rendered more delicately sensible; not of such as pos-

self

selfs that stupid Insensibility which some are pleased to dignify with the name of Philosophy.

It should therefore be expected that those Philosophers, who stand in no need themselves of the assistance of Religion to support their virtue, and who never feel the want of its consolations, would yet have the humanity to consider the very different situation of the rest of Mankind; and not endeavour to deprive them of what Habit, at least, if they will not allow it to be Nature, has made necessary to their morals and to their happiness.—It might be expected, that Humanity would prevent them from breaking into the last retreat of the unfortunate,

who can no longer be objects of their envy or resentment, and tearing from them their only remaining comfort. The attempt to ridicule Religion may be agreeable to some, by relieving them from a restraint upon their pleasures, and may render others very miserable, by making them doubt those truths, in which they were most deeply interested; but it can convey real good and happiness to no one individual.

To support openly and avowedly the cause of Infidelity may be owing in some, to the vanity of appearing wiser than the rest of Mankind; to Vanity, that amphibious passion that seeks for food, not only
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in the affectation of every beauty, and every virtue that adorn Humanity, but of every vice and perversion of the Understanding, that disgrace it. The zeal of making profelytes to it may often be attributed to a like vanity of possessing a direction and ascendancy over the Minds of Men, which is a very flattering species of superiority. But there seems to be some other cause that secretly influences the conduct of some that reject all Religion, who from the rest of their character cannot be suspected of vanity, or any ambition of such superiority. This we shall attempt to explain.

THE very differing in opinion,

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upon

upon any interesting subject, from all around us, gives a disagreeable sensation. This must be greatly increased in the present case, as the feeling, which attends Infidelity or Scepticism in Religion, is certainly a comfortless one, where there is the least degree of sensibility.— Sympathy is much more sought after by an unhappy Mind, than by one chearful and at ease. We require a support in the one case, which in the other is not necessary. A person therefore void of Religion feels himself as it were alone in the midst of society; and though for prudential reasons he chuses on some occasions to disguise his sentiments, and join in some form of religious

ligious worship, yet this to a candid and ingenuous Mind must always be very painful; nor does it abate the disagreeable feeling which a social spirit has in finding itself alone and without any friend to sooth and participate its uneasiness. This seems to have a considerable share in that anxiety which Freethinkers generally discover to make proselytes to their opinions, an anxiety much greater than what is shewn by those, whose Minds are at ease in the enjoyment of happier prospects.

THE excuse, which these gentlemen plead for their conduct, is a regard for the cause of truth. But this is a very insufficient one. None

of them act upon this principle, in its largest extent and application, in common life. Nor could any Man live in the world and pretend so to do. In the pursuit of happiness, * *our beings end and aim*, the discovery of truth is far from being the most important object. It is true the Mind receives a high pleasure from the investigation and discovery of Truth, in the abstract sciences, in the works of Nature and Art, but in all subjects, where the Imagination and Affections are deeply concerned, we regard it only so far as it is subservient to them.— One of the first principles of society, of decency, and of good

* Pope.

manners,

manners, is, that no Man is entitled to say every thing he thinks true, when it would be injurious or offensive to his neighbour. If it was not for this principle, all Mankind would be in a state of hostility.

SUPPOSE a person to lose an only child, the sole comfort and happiness of his life. When the first overflowings of Nature are past, he recollects the infinite goodness and impenetrable wisdom of the Disposer of all events, he is persuaded that the revolution of a few years will again unite him to his child never more to be separated. With these sentiments he acquiesces with a melancholy yet pleasing resignation

tion to the Divine will. Now supposing all this to be a deception, a pleasing dream, would not the general sense of Mankind condemn the Philosopher as barbarous and inhuman, who should attempt to wake him out of it?—Yet so far does vanity prevail over good-nature, that we frequently see Men, on other occasions of the most benevolent Tempers, labouring to cut off that hope, which can alone cheer the Heart under all the pressures and afflictions of Human Life, and enable us to resign it with cheerfulness and dignity.

RELIGION may be considered in three different views. First, As containing doctrines relating to the
being

being and perfections of God, his moral administration of the world, a future state of existence, and particular communications to Mankind by an immediate supernatural revelation.—Secondly, As a rule of life and manners.—Thirdly, As the source of certain peculiar affections of the Mind, which either give pleasure or pain, according to the particular genius and spirit of the Religion that inspires them.

IN the first of these views, which gives a foundation to all religious belief, and on which the other two depend, Reason is principally concerned. On this subject the greatest efforts of human genius and application have been exerted, and
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with the most desirable success in those great and important articles that seem most immediately to affect the interest and happiness of Mankind. But when our enquiries here are pushed to a certain length, we find that Providence has set bounds to our Reason, and even to our capacities of apprehension. This is particularly the case, with respect to infinity and the moral œconomy of the Deity. The objects are here in a great measure beyond the reach of our conception; and induction from experience, on which all our other reasonings are founded, cannot be applied to a subject altogether dissimilar to any thing we are acquainted

quainted with.—Many of the fundamental articles of Religion are such, that the Mind may have the fullest conviction of their truth, but they must be viewed at a distance, and are rather the objects of silent and religious veneration, than of metaphysical disquisition. If the Mind attempts to bring them to a nearer view, it is confounded with their strangeness and immensity.

WHEN we pursue our enquiries into any part of Nature, beyond certain bounds, we find ourselves involved in perplexity and darkness. But there is this remarkable difference between these and religious enquiries : In the investigation
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of Nature, we can always make a progress in knowledge, and approximate to the truth by the proper exertion of genius and observation; but our enquiries into religious subjects, are confined within very narrow bounds; nor can any force of reason or application lead the Mind one step beyond that impenetrable gulf, which separates the visible, and invisible world.

THOUGH the articles of religious belief, which fall within the comprehension of Mankind, and seem essential to their happiness, are few and simple, yet ingenious Men have contrived to erect them into most tremendous systems of metaphysical subtlety, which will long remain

remain monuments both of the extent, and the weakness of human Understanding. The pernicious consequences of such systems, have been various. By attempting to establish too much, they have hurt the foundation of the most interesting principles of Religion.—Most Men are educated, in a belief of the peculiar, and distinguishing opinions of some one religious sect or other. They are taught that all these are equally founded on Divine authority, or the clearest deductions of Reason. By which means, their system of Religion hangs so much together, that one part cannot be shaken, without endangering the whole. But where-
ever

ever any freedom of enquiry is allowed, the absurdity of some of these opinions, and the uncertain foundation of others, cannot be concealed. This naturally begets a general distrust of the whole, with that fatal lukewarmness in Religion, which is its necessary consequence.

THE very habit of frequent reasoning, and disputing upon religious subjects, diminishes that reverence, with which the Mind would otherwise consider them. This seems particularly to be the case, when Men presume to enter into a minute scrutiny of the views, and œconomy of Providence, in the administration of the world, why
the

the Supreme Being made it as it is, the freedom of his actions, and many other such questions, infinitely beyond our reach. The natural tendency of this is to lessen that awful veneration with which we ought always to contemplate the Divinity, but which can never be preserved, when Men canvass his ways with such unwarrantable freedom. Accordingly we find, amongst those sectaries where such disquisitions have principally prevailed, that he has been mentioned and even addressed with the most indecent and shocking familiarity. The truly devotional spirit, whose chief foundation and characteristic is genuine and profound humility,

is not to be looked for among such persons.

ANOTHER bad effect of this speculative Theology has been to withdraw people's attention from its practical duties.—We usually find that those, who are most distinguished by their excessive zeal for opinions in Religion, shew great moderation and coolness as to its precepts; and their great severity in this respect, is commonly exerted against a few vices where the Heart is but little concerned, and to which their own dispositions preserved them from any temptations.

BUT the worst effects of speculative and controversial theology
are

are those which it produces on the Temper and Affections.—When the Mind is kept constantly embarrassed in a perplex and thorny path, where it can find no steady light to shew the way, nor foundation to rest on, the Temper loses its native chearfulness, and contracts a gloom and severity, partly from the chagrin of disappointment, and partly from the social and kind Affections being extinguished for want of exercise. When this evil is exasperated by opposition and dispute, the consequences prove very fatal to the peace of society; especially when Men are persuaded, that their holding certain opinions intitles them to the Divine favor;

and that those, who differ from them, are devoted to eternal destruction. This persuasion breaks at once all the ties of society. The toleration of Men who hold erroneous opinions, is considered as conniving at their destroying not only themselves, but all others who come within the reach of their influence. This produces that cruel and implacable spirit, which has so often disgraced the cause of Religion, and dishonoured Humanity.

YET the effects of religious controversy, have sometimes proved beneficial to Mankind. That spirit of free enquiry, which incited the first Reformers to shake off the yoke of ecclesiastical tyranny, naturally
begot

begot just sentiments of civil liberty, especially when irritated by persecution. When such sentiments came to be united with that bold enthusiasm, that severity of temper and manners that distinguished some of the Reformed sects; they produced those resolute and inflexible Men, who alone were able to assert the cause of liberty, in an age when the Christian world was enervated by luxury or superstition; and to such Men we owe that freedom, and happy constitution, which we at present enjoy.— But these advantages of religious enthusiasm have been but accidental.

In general it would appear, that

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Religion,

Religion, considered as a science, in the manner it has been usually treated, is but little beneficial to Mankind, neither tending to enlarge the Understanding, sweeten the Temper, or mend the Heart. At the same time the labours of ingenious Men, in explaining obscure and difficult passages of Sacred Writ, have been highly useful and necessary. And tho' it is natural for Men to carry their speculations, on a subject that so nearly concerns their present and eternal happiness, farther than Reason extends, or than is clearly and expressly revealed; yet these can be followed by no bad consequences, if they are carried on with that
modesty

modesty and reverence which the subject requires. They become pernicious only when they are formed into systems, to which the same credit and submission is required, as to Holy Writ itself.

WE shall now proceed to consider Religion as a rule of life and manners. In this respect its influence is very extensive and beneficial, even when disfigured by the wildest superstition, as it is able to check and conquer those passions, which reason and philosophy are too weak to encounter. But it is much to be regretted, that the application of Religion to this end hath not been attended to with that care which the importance of

the subject required.—The speculative part of Religion seems generally to have engrossed the attention of Men of Genius. This has been the fate of all the useful and practical arts of life, and the application of Religion to the regulation of life and manners must be considered entirely as a practical art.—The causes of this neglect, seem to be these.—Men of a philosophical Genius have an aversion to all application, where the active powers of their own Minds are not immediately employed. But in acquiring a practical art, a philosopher is obliged to spend most of his time in employments where his Genius and Understanding have

no exercise.—The fate of the practical parts of Medicine and of Religion have been pretty similar. The object of the one is to cure the diseases of the Body; of the other, to cure the diseases of the Mind. The progress and degree of perfection of both these arts ought to be estimated by no other standard than their success in the cure of the diseases, to which they are severally applied.—In Medicine, the facts on which the art depends, are so numerous and complicated, so misrepresented by fraud, credulity, or a heated Imagination, that there has hardly ever been found a truly philosophical Genius, who has attempted the practical part of it.

There are, indeed, many obstacles of different kinds, which concur to render any improvement in the practice of Physic a matter of the utmost difficulty, at least while the profession rests on its present narrow foundation. Almost all physicians, who have been Men of ingenuity, have amused themselves in forming theories, which gave exercise to their invention, and at the same time contributed to their reputation. Instead of being at the trouble of making observations themselves, they culled out of the promiscuous multitude already made, such as best suited their purpose, and dressed them up in the way their system required. In
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consequence of this, the history of Medicine does not so much exhibit the history of a progressive art, as a history of opinions, which prevailed perhaps for twenty or thirty years, and then sunk into contempt and oblivion.—The case has been nearly similar in practical Divinity. But this is attended with much greater difficulties, than the practical part of Medicine. In this last, nothing is required, but assiduous and accurate Observation, and a good Understanding to direct the proper application of such Observation. But to cure the diseases of the Mind, there is required that intimate knowledge of the Human Heart, which must be drawn from

life itself, and which books can never teach; of the various disguises, under which vice recommends herself to the Imagination; of the artful association of Ideas, which she forms there; and of the many nameless circumstances that soften the Heart and render it accessible. It is likewise necessary to have a knowledge of the arts of insinuation and persuasion, of the art of breaking false or unnatural associations of Ideas, or inducing counter associations, and opposing one passion to another; and after all this knowledge is acquired, the successful application of it to practice depends in a considerable degree on powers, which

no

no extent of Understanding can confer.

VICE does not depend so much on a perversion of the Understanding, as of the Imagination and Passions, and on habits originally founded on these. A vicious Man is generally sensible enough that his conduct is wrong; he knows that vice is contrary both to his duty and to his interest, and therefore all laboured reasoning to satisfy his Understanding of these truths is useless, because the disease does not lie in the Understanding. The evil is seated in the Heart. The Imagination and Passions are engaged on its side, and to them the cure must be applied.

Here

Here has been the general defect of writings and sermons, intended to reform Mankind. Many ingenious and sensible remarks are made on the several duties of Religion, and very judicious arguments are brought to enforce them. Such performances may be attended to with pleasure, by pious and well-disposed persons, who likewise may derive from thence useful instruction for their conduct in life. The wicked and profligate, if ever books of this sort fall in their way, very readily allow that what they contain are great and eternal truths, but they leave no lasting impression. If any thing can rouse them, it is the power of
lively

lively and pathetic description, which traces and lays open their Hearts through all their windings and disguises, makes them see and confess their own characters in all their deformity and horror, impresses their Hearts, and interests their Passions by all the motives of love, gratitude, and fear, the prospect of rewards and punishments, and whatever other motives Religion or Nature may dictate. But to do this effectually requires very different powers from those of the Understanding. A lively and well-regulated Imagination is essentially requisite.

IN public addresses to an audience, the great end of reformation
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is most effectually promoted, because all the powers of voice and action, all the arts of eloquence may be brought to give their assistance. But some of those arts depend on gifts of Nature, and cannot be attained by any strength of Genius or Understanding. Even where Nature has been liberal of those necessary requisites, they must be cultivated by much practice before the proper exercise of them can be acquired.—Thus a public speaker may have a voice that is musical and of great compass, but it requires much time and labour to attain its just modulation, and that variety of flexion and tone, which a pathetic discourse requires.

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The same difficulty attends the acquisition of that propriety of action, that power over the expressive features of the countenance, particularly of the eyes, so necessary to command the Hearts and Passions of an audience.

It is usually thought that a preacher, who feels what he is saying himself, will naturally speak with that tone of voice and expression in his countenance, that best suits the subject, and which cannot fail to move his audience. Thus it is said, a person under the influence of fear, anger, or sorrow, looks and speaks in the manner naturally expressive of these emotions. This is true in some mea-

sure; but it can never be supposed, that any preacher will be able to enter into his subject with such real warmth upon every occasion. Besides, every prudent Man will be afraid to abandon himself so entirely to any impression, as he must do to produce this effect. Most Men, when strongly affected by any passion or emotion, have some peculiarity in their appearance, which does not belong to the natural expression of such an emotion. If this be not properly corrected, a public speaker, who is really warmed and animated with his subject, may nevertheless make a very ridiculous and contemptible figure.—It is the business of Art to,
shew

show Nature in her most amiable and graceful forms, and not with those peculiarities in which she appears in particular instances; and it is this difficulty of properly representing Nature, that renders the eloquence and action, both of the pulpit and the stage, acquisitions of such difficult attainment.

BUT besides those talents inherent in the preacher himself, an intimate knowledge of Nature will suggest the necessity of attending to certain external circumstances, which operate powerfully on the Mind, and prepare it for receiving the designed impressions. Such in particular is the proper regulation of Church Music, and the solemn-

nity and pomp of public worship. Independent of the effect that these particulars have on the Imagination, it might be expected that a just Taste, a sense of decency and propriety, would make them more attended to than we find they are. We acknowledge that they have been abused, and have occasioned the grossest superstition; but this universal propensity to carry them to excess, is the strongest proof that the attachment to them is deeply rooted in Human Nature, and consequently, that it is the business of good sense to regulate, and not vainly to attempt to extinguish it. Many religious sects in their infancy have supported themselves without

without any of these external assistances; but when time has abated the fervor of their first zeal, we always find that their public worship has been conducted with the most remarkable coldness and inattention, unless supported by well-regulated ceremonies. In fact it will be found, that those sects who at their commencement have been most distinguished for a religious enthusiasm that despised all forms, and the Genius of whose tenets could not admit the use of any, have either been of short duration, or ended in infidelity.

THE many difficulties that attend the practical art of making Religion influence the manners and lives of

Mankind, by acquiring a command over the Imagination and Passions, have made it too generally neglected, even by the most eminent of the Clergy for learning and good sense. These have rather chosen to confine themselves to a tract, where they were sure to excel by the force of their own Genius, than to attempt a road where their success was doubtful, and where they might be outshone by Men greatly their inferiors. It has therefore been principally cultivated by Men of lively Imaginations, possessed of some natural advantages of voice and manner. But as no art can ever become very beneficial to Mankind, unless it be under the direction

direction of Genius and good sense, it has too often happened, that the art we are now speaking of has become subservient to the wildest fanaticism, sometimes to the gratification of vanity, and sometimes to still more unworthy purposes.

THE third view of Religion considers it as engaging and interesting the affections, and comprehends the devotional or sentimental part of it.—The devotional spirit is in some measure constitutional, depending on liveliness of Imagination and sensibility of Heart, and, like these qualities, prevails more in warmer climates than it does in ours. What shews its great dependence on the Imagination, is

the remarkable attachment it has to Poetry and Music, which Shakespear calls the Food of Love, and which may with equal truth be called the Food of Devotion. Music enters into the future Paradise of the devout of every sect and of every country. The Deity, viewed by the eye of cool Reason, may be said with great propriety to dwell in light inaccessible. The Mind struck with the immensity of his being, and with a sense of its own littleness and unworthiness, admires with that distant awe and veneration that almost excludes love. But viewed by a devout Imagination, he may become an object of the warmest affection,

and even passion.—The philosopher contemplates the Deity in all those marks of wisdom and benignity diffused through the various works of Nature. The devout Man confines his views rather to his own particular connection with the Deity, the many instances of his goodness he himself has experienced, and the many greater he still hopes for. This establishes a kind of intercourse, which often interests the Heart and Passions in the deepest manner.

THE devotional Taste, like all other Tastes, has had the hard fate to be condemned as a weakness, by all who are strangers to its joys and its influence. Too much, and too frequent

frequent occasion has been given to turn this subject into ridicule.—A heated and devout Imagination, when not under the direction of a very sound Understanding, is apt to run very wild, and is at the same time impatient to publish all its follies to the world.—The feelings of a devout Heart should be mentioned with great reserve and delicacy, as they depend upon private experience, and certain circumstances of Mind and situation, which the world can neither know nor judge of. But devotional writings executed with Judgment and Taste, are not only highly useful, but to all, who have a true sense of Religion, peculiarly engaging.

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THE devotional spirit united to good sense and a chearful temper, gives that steadiness to virtue, which it always wants, when produced and supported by good natural dispositions only. It corrects and humanizes those constitutional vices, which it is not able entirely to subdue, and though it too often fails to render Men perfectly virtuous, it preserves them from becoming utterly abandoned. It has besides the most favorable influence on all the passive virtues; it gives a softness and sensibility to the Heart, and a mildness and gentleness to the Manners; but above all, it produces an universal charity and love to Mankind, however

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different

different in Station, Country, or Religion. There is a sublime yet tender melancholy, almost the universal attendant on Genius, which is too apt to degenerate into gloom and disgust with the world. Devotion is admirably calculated to soothe this disposition, by insensibly leading the Mind, while it seems to indulge it, to those prospects which calm every murmur of discontent, and diffuse a cheerfulness over the darkest hours of Human Life.—Persons in the pride of high health and spirits, who are keen in the pursuits of pleasure, interest, or ambition, have either no ideas on this subject, or treat it as the enthusiasm of a weak Mind. But
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this really shews great narrowness of Understanding; a very little reflection and acquaintance with Nature might teach them, on how precarious a foundation their boasted independence on Religion is built; the thousand nameless accidents that may destroy it; and that though for some years they should escape these, yet that time must impair the greatest vigour of health and spirits, and deprive them of all those objects for which at present, they think life only worth enjoying.—It should seem therefore very necessary to secure some permanent object, some real support to the Mind, to cheer the soul when all others shall have lost their influence.—

ence.—The greatest inconvenience, indeed, that attends devotion, is its taking such a fast hold of the affections, as sometimes threatens the extinguishing of every other active principle of the Mind. For when the devotional spirit falls in with a melancholy temper, it is too apt to depress the Mind entirely, to sink it to the weakest superstition, and to produce a total retirement and abstraction from the world, and all the duties of life.

I shall now conclude these loose observations on the advantages arising to Mankind from those faculties, which distinguish them from the rest of the Animal world; advantages which do not seem correspondent

spondent to what might be reasonably expected from a proper exertion of these faculties, particularly among the few who have the highest, intellectual abilities, and full leisure to improve them. The capital error seems to consist in such Men's confining their attention chiefly to enquiries that are either of little importance, or the materials of which lie in their own Minds.—The bulk of Mankind are made to act, not to reason, for which they have neither abilities nor leisure. They who possess that deep, clear, and comprehensive Understanding which constitutes a truly philosophical Genius, seem born to an ascendancy and empire
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over the Minds and affairs of Mankind, if they would but assume it. It cannot be expected, that they should possess all those powers and talents, which are requisite in the several useful and elegant arts of life, but it is they alone who are fitted to direct and regulate their application.



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